

THE
INITIALS

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A Story of Modern Life

BY

THE BARONESS TAUTPHŒUS

AUTHOR OF "QUITS," "CYRILLA"
"AT ODDS," ETC.

VOLUME II.

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

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THE INITIALS.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CHURCHYARD.

HAMILTON experienced a sort of satisfaction in avoiding both sisters for some time—the idea that he was endeavouring to cure Crescenz of her too evident partiality was almost sublime, and would probably have turned his youthful head had not Hildegarde formed a counterpoise. Her former dislike to him seemed to have returned with redoubled force. She scarcely looked at, never spoke to him, and seemed not in the least to observe that he no longer passed the evenings at home. He had found no difficulty in disposing of his time ; introductions to a few German families had been followed by general invitations, of which he availed himself at first with eager pleasure, but soon afterwards with a feeling of indescribable *ennui* ; he missed Hildegarde's society, and began to consider in what way he could imper-

ceptibly renew their former intimacy ; but this was more difficult than he had imagined, for the sisters seemed to have formed an alliance offensive and defensive against him. Crescenz no longer sang when learning to make pies and puddings in the kitchen ; and if he looked in, she retreated behind the dresser. Hildegarde's door was now always shut, perhaps because the weather had become colder, but Hamilton imagined it was to prevent his leaning against the door-posts, to watch her giving her brothers instruction until the dinner was announced. The rarity and shortness of his present intercourse served but to keep her in his memory, and perpetually renew his regret for their last most unnecessary quarrel.

One cold fine morning, as he was leaving the house to keep an appointment with Zedwitz, he perceived her standing with Crescenz and her father at the passage-window looking into the court. They were dressed in deep mourning, and held in their hands large wreaths of ivy, interspersed with clusters of red berries ; they contemplated them with evident satisfaction, while their father spoke so earnestly that Hamilton's approach was at first unperceived, and he heard Mr. Rosenberg say, " You can easily imagine why I prefer going alone, and at some other time. As long as you were at school, gratitude for my wife's attention forced me to accompany her to the churchyard—the task of placing the wreaths now

devolves on you, and I wish you both to thank her as she deserves. You will not surely find it difficult to comply with my request."

"I hope nothing unexpected has occurred—" began Hamilton, looking at the sable garments of the sisters.

"Nothing whatever," replied Mr. Rosenberg, smiling. "It is All Saints' Day, and my girls are going to place wreaths on their mother's grave. I suppose you too are on the way to the churchyard, like all the rest of the world?"

"No," said Hamilton, "why should I go there?"

"I don't know, indeed," replied Mr. Rosenberg, "excepting as a stranger it might interest you to see the decorated graves."

"If there be anything to see, I shall certainly ride to the churchyard after I have kept my appointment with Zedwitz," said Hamilton, stooping to examine the wreath which hung on Hildegarde's arm.

"My wife surprised Hildegarde with this wreath and a bouquet of superb dahlias this morning, and I have just been telling her that her mother's grave has been decorated every year in the same manner."

"I am fully aware of my step-mother's kindness," said Hildegarde, with some embarrassment, "and am sorry I ever did her injustice."

"That's right, Hildegarde," replied her father. "Now I know you will say all I wish—to-morrow

we can go alone together, but to-day you must accompany your step-mother."

Hamilton desired his servant to meet him at the churchyard, and rode off to the barracks ; he had no difficulty in persuading Zedwitz to accompany him, after having told him Hildegarde was there. "I will go to meet the living," he said, "but not to pray for the dead, inasmuch as I not only doubt the efficacy of my prayers, but the existence of purgatory."

"Hush !" said Hamilton, laughing ; "no good Catholics should entertain a doubt on the subject. I hope I shall not find you as unbelieving as my friend Biedermann, who has substituted philosophy for religion, and talks of the soul resolving itself into the eternal essence after its separation from the body."

"No," said Zedwitz, "I am a good Catholic, and believe more than many professors of my religion. I go to mass every Sunday and holiday, and my mother takes care that I confess my sins once a year at least."

"That same confession must be rather a bore," observed Hamilton.

"Sometimes—rather," replied Zedwitz, making his horse dance along the road.

"It seems as if all Munich had turned out in mourning," said Hamilton ; "the crowd, too, reminds me of the October fête, but the faces do not exactly suit the garments. Is it not necessary to look a *little* sorrowful on such an occasion ?"

"How can you be so unreasonable!" exclaimed Zedwitz; "many of these persons are about to visit the graves of relations who have been dead a dozen years! For my part, I find something respectable, almost praiseworthy, in the dedication of one day in the year to the memory of the dead, even though tearlessly spent."

"I quite agree with you," said Hamilton, "and the idea of praying for their souls is poetical in the extreme. Had I been a Catholic, that is one of the tenets I should most tenaciously have believed. But," he resumed after a long pause, "it seems odd that All Saints' Day instead of All Souls' Day, should be chosen—can you tell me why?"

"No," replied Zedwitz, "you must ask someone better informed on these subjects than I am; all I know is, that the observance itself was instituted by one of the popes about twelve hundred years ago."

"But I should have thought that as none of the relatives of these people have been saints—to-morrow, being All Souls' Day, would be the proper day to choose."

"Very likely," answered Zedwitz, laughing. "I have never thought about the matter, but I suppose the first of November is what you would in England call the most fashionable day. Ask my mother the first time you see her, and she will tell you everything about it. By-the-by, when do you intend to visit us?"

“As soon as I have a second horse and a sledge. I enjoy the idea of sledging so much that I wish with all my heart it would begin to snow to-morrow. But here we are, and I hope Hildegarde may prove a very loadstone to you, otherwise we shall scarcely find her among all these people.”

The crowd was immense, and they made their way slowly through it, but Hamilton was interested in the novelty of the scene; his companion's eyes wandered toward the different groups of dark moving figures, who occasionally stopped to sprinkle the graves of departed friends with water placed near for the purpose. Hamilton was occupied with the tombstones and crosses, which were variously and tastefully decorated with wreaths, festoons, bouquets of flowers, and coloured lamps. Even the graves of the poorest were strewn with charcoal, and ornamented with red berries and moss, while tearful groups surrounding those newly made, gave an additional shade of solemnity to a religious rite which Hamilton had been taught to consider superfluous.

The attempt to find the Rosenbergs, or rather Hildegarde, among the moving multitude, was long fruitless, and might have proved altogether so, had not they met the Hoffmanns and Raimund, who led them at once to the object of their search. Madame Rosenberg was preparing to depart, and held in her hand a brush dipped in water, which she shook over the grave. Hildegarde and Crescenz followed her example, before

they spoke to Zedwitz or Hamilton ; but directly they laid it aside, the two boys, finding themselves unwatched, began a contest for it, which became so loud, that their mother, turning quickly towards them, and perceiving their irreverent conduct, seized the subject of dispute, and bestowing a thump upon each, shoved them on before her, while she exclaimed : “ I ought to have left you at home, you tiresome children ; you have never ceased plaguing me since we came out. Only imagine,” she said, addressing Hamilton ; “ Gustle was twice nearly run over, and Peppy fell so often, that the Major was at last obliged to carry him ! ”

Zedwitz and Raimund had immediately joined Hildegarde. Raimund, whose mouth had been distended by a frightful yawn when they had met him, was now smiling radiantly, and evidently endeavouring to monopolise his cousin, who, however, seemed rather indisposed to listen to him, and bestowed her attentions almost exclusively on Zedwitz. Raimund at length rejoined his betrothed, saying, loud enough for Hamilton to hear, “ Hildegarde knows what she is about ; when Zedwitz is present she has neither word nor look for her poor cousin ! ”

“ You get words and looks enough from her every evening when she is with us,” observed Madame de Hoffmann, with some bitterness.

Hamilton turned round, and saw Mademoiselle de Hoffmann’s glance of reproach towards her mother, and Raimund’s confusion. The words

“every evening ” grated on his ear, and before he could arrange the unpleasant ideas which had at once entered his mind, they had reached the churchyard gate, and Zedwitz, approaching him, whispered hurriedly, “ I would not lose this walk home for any consideration. Your advice about Hildegarde was excellent, and I am determined to follow it. Pray let your servant take charge of my horse.”

“My advice ! ” repeated Hamilton, with a forced smile, but Zedwitz had left him, and the crowd had closed between them. Murmuring some directions to his servant, Hamilton sprang upon his horse—the animal, always restive, no sooner felt his impetuous spring than he plunged violently, and on receiving an angry check, reared—lost his balance—and fell backwards—rolling over his rider to the horror of all the bystanders.

CHAPTER XIX.

GERMAN SOUP.

HAMILTON was taken up senseless. Zedwitz rushed to his assistance. Madame Rosenberg could not leave her children, but was obliged to hold them fast by their hands. Major Stultz endeavoured with a half-offended air to tranquillise Crescenz, whose screams had begun to subside into a flood of tears. Raimund coolly

exclaimed to Mademoiselle de Hoffmann that Hamilton had been aware of the viciousness of the horse when he purchased it, but had imagined himself too good a rider to be thrown. Hildegarde, having obtained a flacon de l'eau de Cologne from a stranger, was soon beside Zedwitz, endeavouring to restore Hamilton to consciousness ; he very soon opened his eyes, looked around him, and on Zedwitz asking him where he was hurt, began to speak incoherently in English.

"We must get a carriage and take him home as soon as possible," said Zedwitz ; "he seems more seriously injured than I imagined from the slight wound on his temple."

"Well, this is really dreadful !" exclaimed Madame Rosenberg ; "and there is not a soul in our house, for I gave Walburg leave to go out. Here is the key of the door—what can I do with the boys ?"

"Let me take charge of them," said Madame de Hoffmann.

"I am as much obliged to you for the offer as if I could accept it," replied Madame Rosenberg, "but unfortunately they are so unruly that I cannot leave them with you more than with their sisters and the Major. There is no help for it. Hildegarde, you must go in the carriage, and send old Hans directly for Doctor Berger."

"May I not go, too ?" said Crescenz, timidly ; "I am so tired !"

"Oh, of course," replied her mother, ironically ; "another fit of screaming would greatly benefit Mr. Hamilton. Here, Hildegarde, take the key and be off."

On their way home, Hamilton alone was loquacious ; he spoke English incessantly, sometimes murmuring, sometimes vehemently. Hildegarde blushed deeply, and appeared unusually embarrassed which Zedwitz interpreted to his own advantage, totally unconscious that she understood the ravings of Hamilton, which had already revealed much he was anxious to conceal from her ; his last thought before his fall had been of her, his last feeling annoyance on her account, and he now unreservedly poured forth both with wild volubility.

"I think we had better bind a handkerchief over his forehead," said Hildegarde at last. "The motion of the carriage has made the blood flow."

"I ought to have thought of that," said Zedwitz, assisting her ; "he does not seem to know either of us, and evidently thinks you some other person. Who is this Helene of whom he is speaking now ?"

"Some one in England, I suppose."

"Poor fellow ! most probably he fancies himself at home. I am very glad to perceive that he is beginning to be exhausted. There is something frightful in this sort of raving, even when one does not understand it."

“Do you think there is any danger to be apprehended?” asked Hildegarde, calmly.

“I hope not; but his brain must be affected in some way, or he would not talk as he has done.”

Directly on reaching the house they sent for Doctor Berger, who came, accompanied by Mr. Biedermann; the latter declaring at once his intention of remaining to take care of his friend. Hamilton looked inquiringly from one to the other as they entered the room, and then said quickly in German, “I know you.”

“I am glad to hear it,” said the Doctor, adjusting his spectacles, and turning to Biedermann, he whispered, “They have been unnecessarily alarmed, it seems.”

“Yes, I know you. You are the ugly old doctor with the protruding chin who married Crescenz, after she had walked by moonlight at Seon.”

The Doctor shook his head and turned to Zedwitz for an explanation of the accident. This was quickly given, and he and Hildegarde waited with evident anxiety to hear the Doctor’s opinion. It was not so favourable as they had expected—severe remedies were necessary, and a fortnight elapsed before Hamilton was pronounced quite out of danger. During this time nothing could equal the attention bestowed on him by the Rosenberg family and his friend Biedermann, who passed every night on a sofa in his room. Zedwitz, too, spent daily hours with him—per-

haps the visits of the latter were not quite disinterested, for he often met Hildegarde, who was employed to amuse Hamilton, as he was neither allowed to hear reading, nor to attempt to read himself. As soon as he was pronounced convalescent, he had a constant succession of visitors every day ; not only his own acquaintance, but everyone who had seen him with the Rosenbergs ; he felt at times perhaps quite as much bored as obliged, and remembered occasionally with regret that more dangerous part of his illness when Hildegarde had sat alone in his darkened chamber, and Crescenz gently opened the door every quarter of an hour to ask if he were better—her mother, at Major Stultz's instigation, having strictly forbidden her to enter the room. Even the fussy visits of Madame Rosenberg, who invariably insisted on half making his bed and thumping all his pillows, were recollected with pleasure, and he wondered at the impatience with which he had received these well-meant civilities, having once forgotten himself so far as to wish in very correct German that the devil would come *in ipsissima persona* and take her out of his presence ! which speech had so alarmed her for the state of his brain that she had immediately sent off for the doctor.

The period of convalescence was not without its pleasures either, and Hamilton knew how to appreciate them. Hildegarde was obliged to read or talk to him whenever he choose, was forbidden

to contradict or quarrel with him, and, when on one day he complained of cold hands, she had been ordered to knit cuffs for him, and had done so with apparent pleasure—then she had learned to play chess in order to take Biedermann's place when he could not come, and had to submit to be checkmated as often as Hamilton pleased without losing her temper. He had insensibly grown tyrannical, too—upbraided her if she remained long out walking—refused to eat his dinner if she did not bring it to him, and insisted on the whole family spending the evenings in his room, thereby effectually preventing her from going to the Hoffmanns.

Among Hamilton's most constant visitors was Madame Berger, and she was always welcome, for she amused him. "I should like to know," she said one day, seating herself on the sofa beside him, "I should like to know how long you intend to play invalid? It is astonishing how desponding, almost pusillanimous, you men become when you are in the least ill! I lose all patience when I see the Doctor feeling his own pulse fifty times a day, and consulting half a dozen good friends if his heart beat a little quicker than usual—while I have palpitations every day of my life, and never think of complaining or fancying that I have a diseased heart! My father was even worse than the Doctor; if he had but a cold in his head, he immediately mounted a black silk night-cap with a tassel pen-

dant, wrapped himself up in his dressing-gown, and wandered about the house discovering all sorts of things not intended for his eyes or ears, and finding fault with everybody and everything that came in his way, although at other times the best-natured man imaginable. He had a habit, too, on such occasions, of eating a bowl of soup every half hour, and then imagining it was illness which prevented him from enjoying his meals !”

Hamilton laughed, and at the same moment Hildegarde entered the room, carrying a tray, on which was placed a double-handled china basin, the contents of which, notwithstanding the cover, emitted a most savoury odour ; the little slice of toasted bread on a plate beside it seeming intended to correct any doubts which might arise as to its being an invalid soup. She placed it on the table before him, removed the cover, and stood in waiting, as he first played with the spoon, and then fastidiously tasted it.

“ You have not prepared this for me yourself,” he said, looking up discontentedly.

“ No,” she replied ; “ I—I heard papa’s voice, and begged Walburg to——”

“ I knew that,” cried Hamilton, pettishly. “ Walburg always forgets the salt. Just taste it yourself, and you will be convinced that I cannot swallow it in its present state.”

“ Let me try it,” cried Madame Berger ; “ I am an excellent judge of soup, have learned

cookery, and all that sort of thing. Let me see," said she, playing with the spoon exactly as Hamilton had done ; "let me see ; the smell is excellent, but the taste ?—hum ! might require a little more salt, perhaps, but—but still it is eatable. After a few spoonfuls one scarcely remarks the defect—and," she continued, raising the bowl to her mouth, "and when one swallows it quickly, it is really quite refreshing this cold afternoon."

Hamilton laughed ; Hildegarde grew angry. "You may consider this a good joke, Lina," she exclaimed, "but I find it very, very impertinent."

"Now don't get into a passion, my dear, about a miserable bowl of soup," said Madame Berger, laughing maliciously ; "it is really not worth while. Just go to the kitchen and bring another, and I promise not even to look at it."

"But there is no more."

"Ah, bah ! as if I did not know that there was soup put aside for supper."

"But not such soup as that," cried Hildegarde, ingenuously ; "mamma and Crescenz cooked it together, and I was not allowed to touch it for fear of its being spoiled."

"What an opinion they must have of her cookery," remarked Madame Berger, looking towards Hamilton.

"It is of no consequence," he said, laughing ; "I do not deserve any for having been so difficult to please."

"I can bring you a cup of beef-tea—it is better than nothing," said Hildegarde, leaving the room.

"Most careful nurse!" cried Madame Berger, smiling ironically.

"Most indefatigable—most kind," exclaimed Hamilton, warmly.

"And most domineering," added Madame Berger.

"I have not found her so."

"Because you have never contradicted her, perhaps. For instance, what would you take now to refuse this cup of beef-tea when she brings it to you?"

"That would be ungrateful—almost rude," said Hamilton.

"It will be bad enough to afford you an excuse, and I promise to assist you to brave her anger," said Madame Berger, laughing.

Hamilton shook his head and looked a little embarrassed.

"Tell the truth, and say at once you *dare* not do it. She rules you, I perceive, as she does her sister Crescenz, all in the way of kindness, but no thralldom can be more complete. How I shall enjoy seeing you swallow the scalding water dignified with the name of beef-tea. I dare say this time there will be salt enough in it."

"How mischievous you are," cried Hamilton ;
"I do believe you want us to quarrel merely for

your amusement, after having remained for three weeks the best of friends possible."

"You are more than friends if you cannot take the liberty to refuse a cup of bad soup."

Hamilton was about to reply, when the door was opened by Hans to admit Count Zedwitz.

"You have played truant to-day, Zedwitz," said Hamilton, holding out his hand; "I expected you an hour ago."

"I have been skating on the lake in the English Garden. There was a famous frost last night, and——"

"Skating! Here, Hans, look for my skates directly, there is nothing I enjoy more than skating. We will go out together."

"But," said Zedwitz, hesitating, "is it advisable to go out so late? Remember, you have been more than three weeks confined to the house. What will the Doctor say?"

"Hang the Doctor," cried Hamilton, rising.

"I am sure I am exceedingly obliged to you," said his wife, pretending to look offended.

"By way of precaution, and not to lose time, we will drive to the lake in a hackney coach," said Hamilton. "Come with us," he added, turning cavalierly to Madame Berger.

"I have no objection, provided you leave me at home on your way back."

"Agreed," cried Hamilton, entering his bedroom to make the necessary change in his dress.

Madame Berger was standing opposite a long

glass, arranging her bonnet, Zedwitz turning over the leaves of some new book, and Hamilton issuing from his room, when Hildegarde again appeared, carrying another bowl of soup. She was so surprised at the appearance of the latter that she stopped in the middle of the room, and looked inquiringly from one to the other without speaking.

"Mr. Hamilton is going out to take a drive," began Madame Berger, fearing Hildegarde might try to make him alter his intention.

"I am going with Zedwitz to skate in the English Gardens," said Hamilton.

"Perhaps, Hildegarde, you will go with us ; I can play chaperone on the occasion," said Madame Berger.

Hildegarde did not vouchsafe an answer, but turning to Zedwitz, she said reproachfully : "This is not an hour to tempt an invalid to leave the house for the first time."

"I assure you I have not tempted him," replied Zedwitz ; "I only mentioned having been skating to excuse my coming so late."

"You surely will not think of going out this cold day ?" she said, turning to Hamilton.

"The weather," said Madame Berger, "is not likely to grow warmer at this time of the year, and I suppose he must leave the house some time or other."

"In fact, I am no longer an invalid," said Hamilton, "and the air, though cold, will do me good."

"At least drink this beef-tea before you go," said Hildegarde, approaching him.

"How on earth can you expect Mr. Hamilton to swallow such slop as this!" cried Madame Berger, raising the cover as she spoke.

Hildegarde angrily pushed away her hand.

"The carriage is at the door," said Hans.

"Come," cried Madame Berger, laughing, "you have no time to drink this hot water at present, and if you do not make haste I must decline going with you to admire your skating, for it will be too late for me. Have you courage?" she asked, giving Hamilton a look of intelligence.

Hildegarde had perceived that he wished to avoid drinking the beef-tea. She had placed it on the table, and was now standing near the stove apparently tranquil, but a slight contraction of her brows, and the extraordinary brilliancy of her eyes as she followed the motions of each speaker, betrayed the anger with which she was struggling.

"I perceive you are annoyed," said Zedwitz, when about to leave the room; "but," he added, quickly, while the colour mounted to his temples, "you need not be uneasy about your patient; I will bring him back as soon as possible."

"You are mistaken as to the cause of my annoyance," said Hildegarde, with a forced smile; "I am angry with myself for having been such a fool as to prepare that soup."

"You must excuse Hamilton this time. Madame Berger is such an impertinent little person!" said Zedwitz, as he closed the door.

In the meantime Hamilton had nearly descended the stairs. "I can tell you," said Madame Berger, "that Hildegarde is in a towering passion. Did you not see her eyes flashing, and her lips grow blue? I should not wonder if at this moment she were literally dancing in your room!"

"I should like to see her," said Hamilton, stopping suddenly.

"But if you go back you will have to swallow the soup as a peace-offering," said Madame Berger.

"Do you think so? Zedwitz, will you assist Madame Berger into the carriage?—I must return to Hildegarde; but I promise not to detain you more than a minute." He rushed up the stairs as he spoke, entered without noise by means of his skeleton key, and, passing through his bedroom, was able to ascertain the partial truth of Madame Berger's assertion. Hildegarde was walking up and down the room with flushed cheeks, talking angrily to herself, and pushing everything that came in her way. "What a fool—what an egregious fool I was—to make a fire with my own hands to warm that soup!" She kicked the leg of the table as she spoke, making the plates and spoons clatter. "If ever I warm soup for him again I hope, yes, I *hope*, I may

burn my arm as I have done this time." She raised her sleeve and looked frowningly at the suffering limb, which in fact was extremely red and covered with blisters. While she endeavoured with her handkerchief to remove the long streaks of smut which still bore testimony to the origin of the mischief, Hamilton advanced ; and, scarcely conscious of what he was doing, seized her hand, and held it firmly, while he gulped down the soup as fast as he was able. It was, as Madame Berger had said, very hot ; and when he had deposited the bowl on the plate, tears actually stood in his eyes from the excess of his exertions."

"I feel quite warm now," he said, turning to Hildegarde, who stood beside him in great confusion, fearing that she had been overheard, and, as usual, ashamed of her violence, now that it was over. She had covered her arm, and was endeavouring to release her hand, as he added, "You were quite right when you said it was too late for skating to-day. I shall merely drive out for half-an-hour, by way of a beginning. This sacrifice I make to your better judgment."

Hildegarde looked up ; her lips were no longer blue, and her eyes had regained their usual serenity. "To-morrow," she observed, with evident satisfaction, "to-morrow you can go out directly after dinner, when the sun is shining."

"Exactly ; pray don't forget to bespeak a little sunshine for me," he cried, laughing, as he ran out of the room.

"Where is my little tormentor?" he asked, on perceiving that the carriage was unoccupied.

"How could you expect her to wait for you?" said Zedwitz, gravely. She has had the good sense to go home."

"I am glad of it," cried Hamilton, springing gayly into the carriage, "very glad."

"It is confoundedly cold," said Zedwitz, impatiently throwing the folds of his cloak over his shoulder. "I must say your minute was a long one."

"Why, my dear fellow, considering that I had to drink all that hot water, and put Hildegarde in good humour again, I do not think I required much time."

Zedwitz looked out of the window in silence. Hamilton leaned back and indulged in reflection of no disagreeable kind.

"Halt!" cried Zedwitz, suddenly, "we are at the lake."

"Let us drive on. I don't mean to skate to-day," said Hamilton.

"You don't mean to skate!" exclaimed Zedwitz.

"No. I promised Hildegarde merely to take an airing."

"Why did you not tell me that before?"

"Because I feared being deprived of your agreeable society."

"Halt!" cried Zedwitz, vehemently; and the carriage stopped. "I can tell you," he said,

kicking the door to assist Hans in opening it, "I can tell you that you have just received an extremely great proof of my friendship, for if there be any one thing I particularly detest in this world, it is driving about in a machine of this kind. I have an inveterate antipathy to a hackney coach."

"I understand and share your feelings on this subject, generally speaking," said Hamilton, amused at his violence; "but after being confined to one's room for three or four weeks, the air enjoyed even through the windows of a hackney coach is agreeable and refreshing. Come, you may as well drive back with me."

"Sorry, I have a most particular engagement," began Zedwitz, who was now standing on the road, and stamping his feet on the frozen ground, as if they had been cramped.

"You forget you intended to skate with me," cried Hamilton, laughing, while he jumped out of the carriage, took Zedwitz's arm, and walked off quickly with him, neither speaking for several minutes.

"Are you jealous?" asked Hamilton, at length.

"You know best whether or not I have cause to be."

"You have no cause—although I am sorry to be obliged to confess to you that I too begin to find Hildegard altogether irresistible, but she does not care in the least for me, and even were it otherwise, my case is more hopeless

than yours. Your parents will at least vouchsafe to make a flattering opposition, which, as you are an only son, *must* terminate in consent if you are firm—mine would overwhelm me with scornful ridicule were I to hint at anything so preposterous as an early marriage. It is I, in fact, who ought to be jealous, and desperately jealous too, if you knew but all."

"But her anxiety about you just now——"

"Was more natural than flattering," said Hamilton; "she has got the habit of taking care of me during my illness, and even lately exacts a sort of obedience in trifles, which, however, I willingly pay, as she allows me to tyrannise in in other respects."

"But still, I consider you so very dangerous a rival——" began Zedwitz.

"By no means, for though I wish to gain some of Hildegard's esteem, if not affection, I can never speak to her seriously on that subject which alone could interfere with your wishes."

"Do you advise me then to persevere?" asked Zedwitz.

"I must in future decline advising," replied Hamilton; "my confession just now was in fact tantamount to an acknowledgment of my incapacity to do so."

"Ah, bah!" cried Zedwitz, "your manner has convinced me that your love is not very deep-rooted—my fears are more for her than for you. If she once liked you, and confessed it,

there is no saying how serious the affair might become."

"Very true," said Hamilton, "you might in that case prepare for a voyage to the moon, where you would be sure to find my senses in a little phial, nicely corked and labelled."

"Pshaw! Tell me seriously, what would you do in such a case?"

"Seriously—I believe I should act like a fool. Apply to my father with the certainty of being refused, and laughed at into the bargain—write to my Uncle Jack, that he might have time to make a new will and disinherit me—and then, perhaps, enter into a seven years' engagement."

"Hildegarde would never consent to anything so absurd."

"Not at present—but I thought you supposed her to return my——"

"Hang the supposition!" cried Zedwitz, impatiently, and they walked on in silence until Zedwitz again spoke: "I wish, Hamilton, that at least you would promise to tell me if ever you do enter into any kind of engagement with Hildegarde."

"No," said Hamilton, firmly, "I will make no such promise. Let us start fair, we both love her, each after his own manner. I will be honourable, and tell you that you stand high in her estimation, and that the fear of the opposition of your family, and not indifference on her part, caused her former refusal. I have had to com-

bat with her personal dislike, and if I have overcome it, a very lukewarm kind of regard has taken place. To counterbalance your advantages, I live in the same house, and see her daily—hourly—often alone.”

“Let us start fair in good earnest,” cried Zedwitz, eagerly, “but in order to do so, you must establish yourself in my quarters. The rooms which belong to my father when he is in town are at your service ; neither he nor my mother comes to Munich this season, as Agnes’s marriage takes place before the carnival. We will live together—visit the Rosenbergs together, and at the end of two or three months write a letter to Hildegarde, and——”

Hamilton began to laugh. “Had you proposed this plan at Seon, I might have agreed to it—but now it would be absurd to think of such a thing. Putting all other feelings out of the question, Hildegarde has become absolutely necessary to me. When I am ill, she tends me—when I am well, she reads with me, or for me, and amuses me ; and when I am out of temper, she quarrels with me !”

“In the last particular I could supply her place,” said Zedwitz, “for I could quarrel with you easily enough. If I thought you really loved her, I should not so much mind, but you are deliberately seeking a few months’ amusement at her expense, and endeavouring to gain her affection without any object whatever ; for as to your

seven years' engagement, I cannot for a moment believe you serious. Perhaps Englishwomen may consider this pardonable, but my countrywomen——"

"Your countrywomen unfortunately do not understand the meaning of the word flirtation," said Hamilton, interrupting him. "I wish I had time and opportunity to explain it to them."

"Explain to me what flirtation is," said Zedwitz, gravely.

"No," said Hamilton, "I shall do no such thing, for I see by your face that you are ready to preach a sermon upon the crime of endeavouring to please any of your fair countrywomen without having both the intention and power to marry with all possible despatch ; and now, will you come upstairs with me ?"

Zedwitz shook his head.

"I do not mean to press you," said Hamilton, "for I must say I never found you less amusing than to-day. I wish you would make an agreement never to mention Hildegard's name to me."

"It is an excellent idea," said Zedwitz, "but, as I am sincerely attached to her, I hope you will consider it no breach of confidence, should I warn her against this flirtation love of yours."

"None whatever," replied Hamilton, laughing. "You cannot say more and will not probably say half as much in your warning as I have al-

ready said, when she was present, to her sister Crescenz."

"You are incomprehensible," said Zedwitz, shrugging his shoulders, and walking off with a slight frown on his usually good-humoured countenance.

CHAPTER XX.

THE WARNING.

HAMILTON prided himself upon being an excellent skater ; it was, therefore, with no little satisfaction that he perceived, the next day, that he had been followed to the lake by the Rosenberg and Hoffmann families—no sooner, however, had Zedwitz seen the former, than his skates were thrown aside—a place beside Hildergarde secured, and he accompanied them home. This occurred several days successively, and Zedwitz at length, on finding that he had regained his former intimacy, ventured to give the proposed warning. Hamilton was at the moment sweeping before them, "on sounding skates a thousand different ways," and exhibiting more than usual grace and animation. Zedwitz began judiciously by praising his rival—commended his person, his varied information and talents, the more extraordinary from his extreme youth, and then regretted that he had lost almost all the freshness belonging to his time of life, that his

ideas were altogether those of a man of the world, that the society of an elder brother, an accomplished *vaurien*, had evidently been of great disadvantage to him, and had given him opinions, especially with respect to women, which were dangerous in the extreme. Hildegarde had listened with a composure so nearly verging on indifference, that Zedwitz, almost reassured, regretted having said so much, and had she continued silent, would have, perhaps, softened his last remark, but she looked up suddenly, and said with her usual energy, "Mr. Hamilton has never spoken of his brother to me, therefore I know nothing about him. You are, however, mistaken as to his opinion of women—he thinks much more highly of them than men generally do, and that he likes their society is evident by his remaining so much at home with us. Mamma says she never knew any young man so perfectly well-educated, and so excellent in every respect."

Zedwitz was not aware of the peculiarity in Hildegarde's disposition which led her invariably to defend the absent; he was, therefore, greatly vexed, and with difficulty stammered, "And you—you—perhaps—think equally highly of him?"

"Perhaps I do—the more I know him, the better I like him," replied Hildegarde, bluntly.

"I am answered," murmured Zedwitz, biting his lip, "my warning comes too late—he knew it when he gave me leave to speak."

"Who gave you leave? What warning?" asked Hildegarde, quickly.

Zedwitz had gone too far to recede, and he now became perfectly explicit. Hildegarde again listened calmly, and when he ceased, observed half reproachfully, "When Mr. Hamilton speaks of you, it is not to warn me—but let us pass over that. I must, however, tell you that you have not in your warning said anything which I have not already heard from himself."

"That's it!" cried Zedwitz, with ill-concealed impatience, "he acted honourably in putting you on your guard, but he now considers himself at liberty to win your affections if he can!"

Hildegarde seemed struck by this remark, and walked on in silence. Zedwitz excused himself for having spoken against his friend on the plea of jealousy, and then urged his own cause with great fervour. While thus speaking, they had taken a wrong turn, and were loudly recalled by Madame Rosenberg, "who wondered what on earth they could have been thinking about!" Zedwitz had no opportunity of renewing the conversation, but he was apparently satisfied on finding that she was not displeased.

When Hamilton returned home that evening, Hildegarde was at the Hoffmann's; she had not visited them for a long time, and on her return, he inquired with extreme affability after each member of the family, cousin Oscar included.

She seated herself as far distant from him as possible, and while answering his questions seemed to think more of a coloured wool, which she was arranging in a basket, than of what she was saying.

"Did your cousin read for you this evening?" asked Hamilton, moving his chair towards her.

"No, he tried a quantity of new music which Marie had just received. Crescenz, do tell me how you distinguish your greens at night? They all appear blue to me!"

"The names and numbers are pinned on each colour," replied Crescenz, pushing forward her neatly arranged basket for inspection.

Major Stultz said something about young women of orderly habits making good wives, which she did not seem to hear, but when Hamilton in returning the basket observed, that the colours were so judiciously arranged, that they reminded him of a rainbow, a smile of childish delight brightened her youthful features and made her look so pretty, that he playfully held back the basket, and began a series of questions on the different colours, exhibiting an excess of ignorance on the subject which seemed to amuse *her* infinitely more than Major Stultz, who first drummed on the table, then pushed back his chair, and finally told her somewhat testily, that "she was preventing Mr. Hamilton from reading his newspaper."

Hamilton understood the hint, and resigned

the basket with a slight laugh ; Crescenz blushed, and, with evident displeasure, followed Major Stultz to another table, where he proposed reading her the letters which he had that day received from Nuremberg.

Hamilton drew his chair close to Hildegarde's, while he observed, " I am very glad that you have no one who has a right to forbid your speaking to me."

Hildegarde bent over her work for a minute, and then looking up asked abruptly, " What sort of a person is your eldest brother ? "

" The best-natured fellow in the world, good-looking, and amusing. You would be sure to like him, if you could pardon his speaking the most execrable French imaginable."

" Is he amiable ? "

" Amiable ? oh, very amiable ! "

" And not a *vaurien* ? "

" *Tant soit peu*," said Hamilton, laughing, " but not half so bad as your cousin Raimund."

" Is he much older than you ? "

" Several years ; but may I ask why my brother has so suddenly become an object of interest to you ? "

" He does not interest me in the least," began Hildegarde, but at that moment, Hamilton, whose hand had been wandering through the entangled skeins of wool in her basket, suddenly drew forth a small book which had been concealed beneath them ; her first impulse was to

prevent his opening it, but she changed her mind, and though blushing deeply, continued to work without uttering a syllable.

Hamilton turned over the leaves for some minutes in silence. "Who recommended you to read the works of Georges Sand?" he asked, as he placed the book beside her on the table.

"Oscar; he told me they were interesting, and extremely well written."

"They are both the one and the other, and yet nothing would have induced me to advise you to read them, especially this volume. I am surprised you did not yourself perceive that it was not suited for a person of your age or——"

"Pshaw!" cried Hildegarde, impatiently. "Mamma wishes me to read French that I may not forget the language; the best writers of the day are, of course, the best for that purpose, and Oscar says all French novels are more or less of this description. He told me that I need not have any scruples, for that these works were written by a woman, and might therefore be read by one."

"So, then, you had scruples?"

"I have none at present," said Hildegarde, taking up the volume, "besides," she added, drawing her chair close to the table, "I positively must know whether or not the heroine marries the young poet."

"Marry!" cried Hamilton, laughing, ironically, "there is not one word of marriage in the

whole book—that would be much too unpoetical. I can hardly, however, imagine that *this* heroine really interests you—a heroine whose thoughts and reasonings are those of a woman who has plunged into the whirlpool of earthly pleasures, and from satiety learned to despise them. I wish it were any of the other works of Sand, or—or that, for your sake Madame Dudevant had been less gloriously graphical in some parts of her work. If,” he added, half inquiringly, “if you merely read to know the end of the story, it is easily told ; the events are few, and I am ready to relate them to you.”

“Oscar has a much higher opinion of my intellect than you have,” observed Hildegarde, slowly turning over the leaves ; “he says my character is so decidedly formed, that I may read, without danger, whatever I please.”

“That was gross flattery,” said Hamilton, “for no girl of seventeen can read a work of this description without danger. The religious speculations alone make it unfit for you—but stay, I can prove it ; read half a dozen pages aloud for me—where you please ; the chances are in my favour that I prove myself right.”

“It is not exactly adapted for reading aloud,” said Hildegarde with some embarrassment.

“That is an infallible criterion by which you may know what to read for the next ten years,” said Hamilton.

“But I dare say I could find many parts which I should have no objection to read aloud.”

"Read then," said Hamilton, with a provoking smile.

Hildegarde began. "The style at least is faultless," she observed, at the end of a few minutes.

"Perfect," said Hamilton; "but go on."

She continued. By degrees her voice became less firm; a deep blush overspread her face; she turned away her head from him, and his eyes rested on her small and now perfectly crimson ear, and yet she persevered until the words almost seemed to suffocate her, when, throwing down the book, she exclaimed, "You were right. I will not read any more of it, nor any of the others recommended by Oscar."

"May I write you a list?" asked Hamilton, eagerly.

"Pray do," cried Hildegarde, turning round. "I promise to read them all."

A leaf was hastily torn out of his pocket-book, a pencil carefully pointed, and two hours scarcely sufficed to bring this most simple business to a satisfactory conclusion, so various were the observations and discussions to which it gave rise.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE STRUGGLE.

THE following Sunday Hamilton saw the whole Rosenberg family, with the exception of Hildegarde, walking in the English Gardens. It appeared odd that she should have remained at

home when her father was present, and he, for a moment, thought of asking the reason ; on consideration, the hope of finding her alone made him turn his horse's head directly homeward, and, on riding into the yard, he looked up to her window, expecting, as usual, to find her there ready to greet him and admire his horse—but not a human being was visible ; even his servant, not expecting his return so early, had disappeared, and he was obliged to lead his horse into the stable himself. He entered the house by the back staircase, visited all the rooms, and even the kitchen, but found all deserted. Madame Rosenberg's room was also unoccupied, but through the partly open door of it he saw Hildgarde sitting on the sofa in the drawing-room, reading so intently that she was perfectly unconscious of his presence. The deep folds of her dark-blue merino dress, with its closely-fitting body, gave a more than usual elegance to her tall, slight figure, as she bent in profile over her book, and Hamilton stood in silent admiration, unconsciously twisting his riding-whip round his wrist, until his eyes rested for the second time on the book which she held in her hand. He started, hesitated, then hastily strode forward and stood before her. Doubt and uncertainty were still depicted on his countenance as Hildgarde looked up ; but her dismay, her deep blush, and the childish action of placing the hand containing the volume behind her, were a

confirmation of his fears that she was reading the forbidden work. "Excuse me for interrupting you," he said, with a forced smile ; "but I really cannot believe the evidence of my own eyes, and must request you to let me look at that book for a moment."

"No, you shall not," she answered, leaning back on the sofa, and becoming very pale while she added, "It is very disagreeable being startled and interrupted in this manner. I thought you told mamma you would meet her at Neuberg-hausen."

"Very true ; perhaps I may meet her there ; but before I go I must and will see that book. On it depends my future opinion of you."

"You shall not see it," cried Hildegarde, the colour again returning to her face.

"The book," said Hamilton, seizing firmly her disengaged hand. "The book, or the name of it !"

"Neither ; let me go !" cried Hildegarde, struggling to disengage her hand.

Like most usually quiet tempered persons, Hamilton, when once actually roused, lost all command of himself ; he held one of her hands as in a vice, and, when she brought forward the other to accelerate its release, he bent down to read the title of the book, which was immediately thrown on the ground, and the then freed hand descended with such violence on his cheek and ear that for a moment he was perfectly stunned ;

and, even after he stood upright, he looked at her for a few seconds in unfeigned astonishment. "Do you think," at length he exclaimed vehemently—"Do you think that I will allow you to treat me as you did Major Stultz, with impunity?" And then, catching her in his arms, he kissed her repeatedly, and with a violence which seemed to terrify her beyond measure. "I gave you fair warning more than once," he added, when at length he had released her. "I gave you fair warning, and you knew what you had to expect." She covered her face with her hands, and burst into a passion of tears.

"I cannot imagine," he continued, impetuously walking up and down the room—"I cannot imagine why you did not, with your usual courage, tell me at once the name of the book, and prevent this scene."

Hildegarde shook her head, and wept still more bitterly.

"After all," he said, seating himself with affected calmness opposite to her, leaning his arms on the table, and drumming upon the book, which now lay undisputed between them, "After all, you are not better than other people! Not more to be trusted than other girls, and I fancied you such perfection! I could have forgiven anything but the—the untruth!" he exclaimed, starting up. "Anything but that! Pshaw! yesterday when you told me that the books had been sent back to the library, I believed you

without a moment's hesitation—I thanked you for your deference to my opinion—ha, ha, ha! What a fool you must have thought me!”

Hildegarde looked up. All expression of humility had left her features, her tears ceased to flow, and, as she rose to leave the room, she turned almost haughtily towards him, while saying:

“I really do not know what right you have to speak to me in this manner. I consider it very great presumption on your part, and desire it may never occur again.”

“You may be quite sure I shall never offend you in this way again,” he said holding the book towards her. “What a mere farce the writing of that list of books was!”

“No, for I had intended to have read all you recommended.”

“And all I recommended you to avoid, too! This—this, which you tacitly promised not to finish——” He stopped; for, while she took the book in silence, she blushed so deeply, and seemed so embarrassed, that he added sorrowfully, “Oh, how I regret having come home! How I wish I had not discovered that you could deceive me!”

“I have *not* deceived you,” said Hildegarde.

Hamilton shook his head, and glanced toward the subject of dispute.

“Appearances are against me, and yet I repeat I have not deceived you. The books *were*

sent to the library yesterday evening—but too late to be changed. Old Hans brought them back again, and I found them in my room when I went to bed. I did not read them last night.”

“But you stayed at home for the purpose to-day,” observed Hamilton, reproachfully.

“No; my mother gave the servants leave to go out for the whole day, and as she did not like to leave the house unoccupied, she asked me to remain at home. I, of course, agreed to do so; without, I assure you, thinking of those hateful books. I do not mean to—I cannot justify what I have done. I can only say in extenuation that the temptation was great. I have been alone for more than two hours—my father’s books are locked up. I never enter your room when you are absent, and I wished to know the end of the story which still interests and haunts me in spite of all my endeavours to forget it. The book lay before me; I resisted long, but at last I opened it; and so—and so——”

“And so, I suppose, I must acknowledge that I have judged you too harshly,” said Hamilton.

“I do not care about your judgment. I have fallen in my own esteem since I find that I cannot resist temptation.”

“And is my good opinion of no value to you?”

“It was, perhaps; but it has lost all worth within the last half-hour.”

“How do you mean?”

"I have seen you in the course of that time suspicious, rough, and what you would yourself call ungentlemanlike."

"A pretty catalogue of faults for one short half-hour!" exclaimed Hamilton, biting his lips.

"You were the last person from whom I should have expected such treatment," continued Hildegarde, while the tears started to her eyes, and her voice faltered, "the very last; and though I did get into a passion and give you a blow, it was not until you had hurt my wrist and provoked me beyond endurance." She left the room and walked quickly down the passage.

"Stay," cried Hamilton, following her, "stay, and hear my excuses."

"Excuses! You have not even one to offer," said Hildegarde, laying her hand on the lock of her door.

"Hear me at least," he said eagerly. "I could not endure the thought of your being one jot less perfect than I had imagined you—that made me suspicious; the wish for proof made me rough; and though I cannot exactly justify my subsequent conduct, I plead in extenuation your own words, 'the temptation was great.'"

Hildegarde's dimples showed that a smile was with difficulty repressed, and Hamilton, taking courage, whispered hurriedly, "But one word more—hear my last and best excuse; it is, that I love you, deeply, passionately; but I need not tell you this, for you must have known it long,

long ago. Hildegarde, say only that our perpetual quarrels have not made you absolutely hate me ! ”

Hildegarde, without uttering a word more, impetuously drew back her hand, sprang into her room, and locked the door. He waited for a minute or two, and then knocked, but received no answer. “ Hildegarde,” he cried, reproachfully, “ Is this right—is this kind ? Even if you dislike me, I have a right to expect an answer.”

“ Go,” she said, in a very low voice ; “ go away. You ought not to be here when I am alone.”

“ Why did you not think of that before ? ”

“ I don’t know. I had not time. I——”

“ Nonsense. Open the door, and let me speak to you for a moment.”

No answer, but he thought he heard her walking up and down the room.

“ Only one moment,” he repeated.

“ I cannot, indeed I cannot. Pray go away.”

He retired slowly to his room ; even before he reached it he had become conscious of the absurdity of his conduct, and the prudence of hers. That she no longer disliked him, he was pretty certain ; that she had so discreetly avoided a confession of other feelings was better for both, as it enabled them to continue their intercourse on the same terms, while the acknowledgment of a participation in his affection would have subjected her to great annoyances, and placed him

in a most embarrassing situation. He was angry with himself—recollected, with shame, that he had repeated the error which he had so much cause to regret on a former occasion, and mentally repenting his own loquaciousness and rejoicing at Hildegarde's taciturnity, he resolved never to refer to the subject again. A ring of the bell at the entrance-door induced him to stop and await her appearance. She did not answer the summons, and it was repeated, accompanied by a few familiar taps on the door. Still she did not move. Again the bell was rung; the knocks became louder, as if administered by some hard instrument, and finally her name was loudly and distinctly pronounced.

"I am coming, papa," she cried at last, running forward, and opening the door precipitately.

Count Raimund sprang into the passage, closed the door with his shoulder, leaned upon it, and burst into a fit of laughter at the dismay legible on the features of his cousin.

"Oscar," she began, seriously, "you must come some other day, Mamma is not at home, and I have been left to——"

"I know, I know," he cried, interrupting her. "I saw them all in the English Gardens—your chevalier Hamilton, too, galloping about like a madman; and for this reason, my most dear and beautiful cousin, I have come here now, hoping for once to see you alone. Do not look so alarmed, I am only come to claim the advice

which you promised to give me on the most important event of my life."

"Not now, not now," said Hildegarde, glancing furtively towards the end of the passage, where, in the shadow of his door, she distinguished Hamilton's figure leaning with folded arms against the wall; "some other time, Oscar."

"What other time? I never see you for a moment alone—even at the Hoffmanns, although my good Marie is too rational to bore me with useless jealousy, does not her deaf old mother watch every movement and intercept every glance with her cold, grey, suspicious eyes? I sometimes wish the old lady were blind instead of deaf, she would be infinitely less troublesome."

"Oh, Oscar!"

"Conceive my being doomed to live in the vicinity of such eyes, dearest creature, and you will pity me, at least!"

"You are not in the least to be pitied—for the Hoffmanns are most amiable," said Hildegarde, hurriedly. "But now I expect you will leave me."

"Expect no such thing! On the contrary, I expect you will invite me to enter this room," he replied, advancing boldly towards her.

"If you enter that room," said Hildegarde, sternly. I shall leave you there, and take refuge with Madame de Hoffmann, who, I know, is now at home."

"Don't be angry, dearest, all places are alike

to me where you are. All places are alike to me where I may tell you without reserve that I love you more than ever one cousin loved another."

"The time is ill chosen for jesting, Oscar ; I never felt less disposed to enjoy anything of the kind than at this moment."

"Indeed ! then let me tell you seriously that I love you to distraction."

"Oscar, even in jest I do not choose to hear such nonsense."

"By heaven, I am not jesting."

"Then, betrothed as you now are, your words are a crime."

"Be it so ; there is, however, no crime I should hesitate to commit were you to be obtained by it. As to breaking my engagement with Marie, that is a trifle not worth considering ; but what am I likely to obtain by doing so ?"

"Dishonour," said Hildegarde, firmly and calmly.

"Hildegarde," he exclaimed, fiercely, "do not affect a coldness which you cannot feel ; do not drive me to madness. My love must not be trifled with ; it is of no rational every-day kind, but violent as my nature, and desperate as my fortunes."

"That is," thought Hamilton, "exactly what she wished. If he continue in this strain she will not shut the door in his face. But I have had enough of this raving, and will no longer

constrain her by my presence." He entered the room, and closed the door.

For more than half an hour he impatiently paced backwards and forwards, stopping only when he heard Raimund's voice suddenly raised. At length he thought he heard a stifled scream, and rushed to the door, scarcely knowing what he feared or expected. Hildegarde was holding her cousin's arm with both hands, while she exclaimed, "For heaven's sake, Oscar, do not frighten me so horribly."

A loud ringing of the house-bell, and the sound of many voices on the stairs, seemed to be a relief to her, while Raimund appeared considerably agitated. "Hide me in your room, Hildegarde ; I am lost if the Hoffmanns find me here."

"And what is to become of me should you be found there?" she asked, while a deadly paleness overspread her features, and she irresolutely placed her hand on the lock of the door, then glanced down the passage, and beckoning Raimund to follow, she led the way to Hamilton's room. "Mr. Hamilton," she said, with a trembling voice, "will you allow Oscar to remain a few minutes in your room, and when no one is in the passage, have the goodness to open the door leading to the back staircase for him?"

"The part which you have assigned me in this comedy, mademoiselle, is by no means agreeable, but I will not be the means of causing you embarrassment ; Count Raimund may easily be

supposed to have voluntarily visited me, and there is no necessity for a retreat by the back staircase, unless he have some motive for wishing to give his visit an air of mystery."

"Ah, very true," said Hildegarde, in a hurried, confused manner, while she moved aside to let her cousin pass.

Hamilton's speech made more impression on Raimund; he looked furious, and seemed to hesitate whether or not to enter the room. Again the bell rang, and Hildegarde was in the act of springing forward, when Raimund caught her arm, and while a fearful frown contracted his brows, with closed teeth, and in the low voice of suppressed rage, he whispered, "One word; is it Zedwitz? or—or—" he looked towards Hamilton.

Hildegarde's face became crimson, she flung off his detaining hand, and ran to the hall-door, which she threw wide open, leaving him to retreat precipitately into Hamilton's room, where, with folded arms, he strode toward the window, after having murmured the words, "Sorry to intrude in this manner." Hamilton moved a chair towards him; he sat down for a moment, but the next jumped up, and going to the door, partly opened it, and looked into the passage.

"I saw Count Raimund enter the house more than half an hour ago," observed a very loud voice, which Hamilton recognised as Madame de Hoffmann's, "and as I knew you were all out

walking, and only Mademoiselle Hildegarde at home, I expected to see him leave it again immediately."

"I think, mamma, you must have been mistaken," said Mademoiselle de Hoffmann, putting her mouth close to her mother's ear.

"I have the misfortune to be somewhat deaf, Marie, but my eyes are as good as yours, and with these eyes I saw him enter this house."

"You are quite right," said Raimund, advancing with the easiest manner and most unconcerned smile imaginable. "I knew that Marie had gone out with Madame Rosenberg, and not imagining that my future mother-in-law could be so much interested in my movements, I ventured, without informing her of my intentions, to visit my friend Hamilton."

"But Mr. Hamilton is out riding," cried Madame de Hoffmann.

"Perhaps he *was* out riding, but I have had the good fortune to find him at home, nevertheless."

"Then he must have come up the other staircase, or I should have seen him through the slit in our door, where I watched you walking upstairs."

"Very possibly," said Raimund, contemptuously.

"Marie," said Madame de Hoffmann, in what she intended for a whisper, but which was audi-

ble to all, "Marie, my child, I don't believe a word of all this. The Englishman is no more in the house than the man in the moon."

"Confound your suspicions," muttered Raimund, angrily. "I suppose, then," he added with a frown, "I shall be obliged, in order to satisfy you, to ask Mr. Hamilton to show himself to the assembled household."

He seemed, however, so very unwilling to make the request, that Madame de Hoffmann's suspicions received confirmation; she turned from him, saying, with a laugh of derision, "Perhaps Hildegarde can assist you in making him appear!"

Her words acted like a charm. Hamilton, who had been an immovable listener of all that had passed, no sooner heard her name mentioned, than he mechanically rose, and taking his hat and whip, issued forth. He forced a smile as he passed the Hoffmanns and Madame Rosenberg, which, on approaching Hildegarde, changed into an expression of contempt that neither her swelled and tearful eyelids nor her excessive paleness could mitigate.

After his return home, he remained in his room until supper was announced, and even then delayed some minutes, to insure Madame Rosenberg's being in the drawing-room when he reached it. She was endeavouring to persuade Hildegarde to leave the stove, near which she was sitting with closed eyes, leaning her head in her hands.

"If you would only eat your supper, Hildegard, it would quite cure your headache, which is probably caused by your having spent the day in a heated room. Next time I shall leave old Hans in charge of the house, for had you been out walking with us as usual, you would have had no headache, I am sure. Don't you think so too, Mr. Hamilton?"

"I think it very probable," he answered, seating himself beside Madame Rosenberg.

"And don't you think if she took some soup she would be better?"

"Perhaps."

"Hildegard, I insist on your trying it—or go to bed at once. You make your head worse by sitting so close to the stove."

Hildegard, without speaking, moved to the vacant chair at the other side of Hamilton, and slowly and reluctantly sipped a few mouthfuls of soup.

By some singular anomaly, Hamilton found himself suddenly in remarkably high spirits—he looked at Hildegard, and congratulating himself on being free from thralldom, gazed with a gay smile on her pale features until they were suffused with red, and great was his triumph to feel and know that there was no sympathetic blush on his own countenance. He told Madame Rosenberg of an engagement he had made with Zedwitz to accompany him to Edelfhof on the following morning, to attend the marriage of his sister, and

requested to have his breakfast at an early hour the next day.

“And you intend to remain away a whole fortnight ! How we shall miss you !” cried Madame Rosenberg.

“You are very kind to say so,” replied Hamilton, laughing.

“And I think so too, though you seem to doubt me. You know I like you better than any of the Englishmen I have had in my house. Captain Black was not to be compared to you, nor Mr. Smith, either, although he used to tell me so often that he was noble even without a *von* before his name, and that he could be made a chamberlain here if he wished it, as he was related to the Duke of Buckel,¹ which always appeared to me such an odd name for a duke that I was half inclined to doubt there being any such person.”

“We have a Duke of Buccleugh——” began Hamilton.

“Very likely he pronounced it that way ; I am sure I heard it often enough to know, but I never can learn an English word until I see it written ; and never should have learned his name if he had not constantly left his cards lying about on the tables ; I dare say I shall find some of them in the card-basket still.” She commenced a dili-

¹ Buckel means in German back, or more generally humpback. It seems that Madame Rosenberg took it in the latter sense.

gent search while speaking, and soon held up a card on which was printed in large German letters the name of Mr. Howard Seymour Scott Smith.

"He used to sometimes say that the last word ought to be left out, for that his real name was Scott."

"Perhaps he inherited property with the name of Smith?"

"No; he said something about a marriage certificate having been lost—that before he was born there was great irregularity in such things in England."

Hamilton laughed.

"Is it not true?" asked Madame Rosenberg.

"Oh, very possibly."

"He told us, too, that in Scotland people could be married without any certificate of birth, baptism, or confirmation—without even the consent of their friends. Franz says this is a fact, and that the existence of such a law is a great temptation to thoughtless young people."

"I have no doubt it is," replied Hamilton; "I would not answer for myself were I led into temptation. A great-uncle of mine made a marriage of this kind and it proved a very happy one—his friends, to provide for him quickly, used all their interest to send him out to India, where he made an enormous fortune, and as he has no children, has been, ever since his return, a sort of lawgiver in our family. I should not have been here now, if old Uncle Jack had not

said that travelling was necessary to make me a man of the world, and that in Germany alone I could learn to speak the German well.

"But," said Madame Rosenberg, "this marriage was a fortunate exception, for," she added, with sundry winks and blinks towards Hildegarde, "for marriages against the consent of relations seldom or never turn out well. Let me give you some more salad, and then, as you are to leave so early to-morrow, I may as well pack up your things to-night."

"By no means," cried Hamilton, "I must beg of you to send for Hans."

"Oh, young Hans is much too awkward, and the old man is gone to bed hours ago. I have been thinking, if you intend to keep Hans, that I will begin to teach him to be handy, and instead of Hildegarde's arranging your linen, he must learn to do it from this time forward."

"That would be very kind of you," said Hamilton.

"For the sewing on of buttons, and all that," continued Madame Rosenberg, delighted at the idea of giving instruction, "he must of course still apply to you, Hildegarde."

Hildegarde, who had been leaning back on her chair, diligently puckering and plaiting her pocket-handkerchief, looked up for a moment, and replied :

"Yes, mamma."

"I shall send for Hans, and give him his first

lessons to-night," said Madame Rosenberg moving towards the door.

"Wait a moment and I can accompany you," cried Hamilton, quickly, "I shall be ready directly."

"Don't hurry yourself," said Madame Rosenberg ; "you will have time enough before Hans comes up ; and I must first see if Peppy has fallen asleep, and if he is properly covered. Don't hurry yourself."

Why did Hamilton bend over his plate ? and why did the colour mount to his temples as the door closed ? Did he begin to entertain doubts of his indifference, or did he dread an explanation with Hildegarde ? He scarcely knew himself, but he felt uncomfortable, and gave himself a quantity of trouble to prevent his companion from observing it.

The distant roll of carriages had already informed them that the opera was over ; but it was not until the sound of voices in the usually quiet street had made the immediate return of her father, sister, and Major Stultz probable, that Hildegarde summoned courage to say, in a very low voice, and without looking up, "What must you think of me——"

"Do you wish to know what I think of you ?" asked Hamilton, with affected negligence.

"Yes ; but do not again judge too harshly."

"I think," he said, facing her deliberately, "I think you are very beautiful."

"Pshaw!" cried Hildegarde, pushing back her chair angrily, "I expected a very different answer."

"Something different," said Hamilton, in the same tone. "Something about distraction and committing crimes, perhaps."

"What occurred to-day is no subject for a jest," she said seriously.

"So I thought a few hours ago, also," said Hamilton; "but now the whole affair appears to me rather amusing than otherwise. Perhaps, however, your cousin alone is privileged to speak to you in this manner, in which case you must pardon me for endeavouring to recollect what he said; but it was so well received that——"

"It was not well received!" cried Hildegarde, interrupting him. "You know it was not; and I am ready," she added, after a pause, "ready to repeat to you every word of our conversation."

"Thank you," said Hamilton, coldly, "but I have already heard enough to enable me to imagine the remainder."

"Perhaps," said Hildegarde, hurriedly, "perhaps you heard—and saw——"

"I heard a declaration of love after the most approved form, a proposal to commit any crime or crimes likely to render him interesting and acceptable to you. I remembered to have once heard you tell your father that you wished to be the object of a love of this kind; but I did not wait to hear your answers, it was your half-sup-

pressed scream which made me foolishly imagine you wished for my presence. When I saw you I perceived at once my mistake, and returned to my room."

"Then you did not see the—the dagger——"

"What dagger?" asked Hamilton, his curiosity excited in spite of himself.

"Oscar's dagger—he threatened to stab himself!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Hamilton. "I really did not think him capable of acting so absurdly I gave him credit for too much knowledge of the world to treat you to such an insipid scene."

"Then you do not think he was serious!"

"I am sure he was not. The dagger was purposely brought for effect. He has proved himself an excellent actor to-day—tragic as well as comic, it seems."

"It was cruel of him deliberately to frighten me," said Hildegarde, thoughtfully.

"It was unpardonable—inexcusable his doing so," cried Hamilton, "for he thought you were alone, and took advantage of finding you unprotected."

"Most men take advantage of finding us unprotected. After the events of to-day I may say all men do so," replied Hildegarde, with so much reproachful meaning in her glance that Hamilton rose from his seat and began to perambulate the room, occasionally stopping to lean on the stove, until her father's voice and approaching steps

made him suddenly move forward towards her, as if he expected her to speak again. She remained, however, silent and motionless ; and at length, overcome by a mixture of anxiety and curiosity, and with an ineffectual effort to appear indifferent, he said quickly, "I thought you were going to tell me what you said that could have given your cousin an excuse for producing a dagger."

"You did not choose to hear when I was willing to tell you ; and now——"

Here Madame Rosenberg entered the room, and Hildegarde rose, saying, "that her head ached intolerably, and she would now go to bed."

"Good-night !" said Hamilton. "I hope your headache will be cured by a long sleep, and that you will be quite well when we meet again."

"Thank you ; before that time I shall most probably have altogether forgotten it," said Hildegarde.

That means, thought Hamilton, she will not pour out my coffee to-morrow at breakfast.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE DEPARTURE.

HILDEGARDE did not appear the next morning, and Hamilton breakfasted with Madame Rosenberg sitting opposite to him in a

striped red and white dressing-gown ; her hair, as usual, twisted up to the very roots with hair-pins, to prepare curls which, however, seldom made their appearance at home, excepting on the evenings which the Hoffmanns spent with her. She sat opposite to him, and watched while he vainly endeavoured to improve his coffee by adding alternately cream and sugar. "One never enjoys a breakfast at this early hour," she observes at length, "the coffee is, however, quite as good as usual ; I made it myself."

"I have no doubt of it," said Hamilton, "but the fact is, I am so accustomed to your daughter Hildegarde's preparing it for me, that I do not know the quantity of cream and sugar necessary—by-the-by, I hope her headache is better this morning?"

"She said so," replied Madame Rosenberg, "but I found her so feverish, and looking so wretchedly ill, that I have forbidden her getting up until Doctor Berger sees her."

"You do not apprehend any serious illness, I hope?"

"Oh, no—but Crescenz tells me that she slept very uneasily—had frightful dreams, and at one time during the night fancied someone intended to stab her ! Such an idea ! I suppose," she added, after a pause, "you expect Count Zedwitz to call for you?"

"I believe so," said Hamilton, absently.

"I am beginning rather to like him," observed Madame Rosenberg.

Hamilton did not appear to hear her.

"You are going to a gay house," she added, "at least it will be gay on such an occasion."

"What occasion?" asked Hamilton, looking up.

"Why, did you not tell me that the only daughter was going to be married? And is not a wedding a very gay thing?"

"Not always," said Hamilton, "for brides generally shed tears and infect the bridesmaids, and the mamma half faints, and the papa is agitated, and when the bridal party leave, the house is immensely dull, until it fill with new people again. Altogether, a wedding is a very deadly-lively festivity, excepting to the two principal actors."

"I will prove the contrary," said Madame Rosenberg, "you shall see how gay our wedding will be—that is, Crescenz's! Did I tell you that it must be deferred until the carnival?"

"Not a word—I thought it was to take place before Christmas."

"Marriages are seldom or never celebrated before Advent," said Madame Rosenberg, "but at all events, Major Stultz's sister has died suddenly, and he must leave for Nuremberg to-morrow."

"I am sorry he has lost his sister," said Hamilton, compassionately.

"Why, in fact, the loss is rather a gain," said

Madame Rosenberg. "He knew very little about her—she was unmarried, rich, and stingy—always on the point of making a fool of herself by marrying some young student or officer. Now the Major quietly inherits all her property—a very pretty addition to what he already has. I told Crescenz yesterday evening that she had drawn a greater prize than she expected."

"And what did she say?"

"Why, not much, but she looked exceedingly pleased—her father has told me since that he thinks she is glad that her marriage is put off, and does not care in the least about the money, of which she has not yet learned the value. This may be partly true—Crescenz may have no objection to a delay, but she is now quite satisfied with the Major, and has no wish whatever to break off her engagement. Count Raimund has been of great use to her!"

"How do you mean?" asked Hamilton surprised.

"Why, his unpardonable negligence towards Marie de Hoffmann forms a fine contrast to the Major's attention and handsome presents. Crescenz is very childish, but she has perceived the difference, nevertheless, and I have not neglected the opportunity to tell her that all young men are careless lovers, and still more careless husbands, and that I am sure she will be much happier when she is married than Marie."

"The carriage is come! The carriage is come

for Hamilton !” cried Peppy, rushing into the room; “and Count Zedwitz is coming up the stairs ! and Crescenz is hiding behind the kitchen-door ! and Walburg is gone with Gustle to school ! and Dr. Berger is in Hildegard’s room ! and papa is putting on his coat ! and he wants you to come to him !”

“Well, have you any more news to tell me before I go ?” said his mother, taking up her bunch of keys from the breakfast-table, “Good morning, Count Zedwitz—you must excuse me—Dr. Berger is here, and—”

“No one ill, I hope ?” said Zedwitz.

“Hildegard is ill,” replied Hamilton ; “have you any objection to waiting until we hear what the Doctor says !”

“Quite the contrary,” said Zedwitz, sitting down, evidently alarmed.

“In the meantime, I can tell Hans to carry down my luggage,” said Hamilton.

Hans was despatched with the portmanteau, carpet-bag, and dressing-case ; but Hamilton, instead of returning to his friend, watched until Madame Rosenberg and the doctor had left Hildegard’s room, and walked up the passage together. A moment after he was at her door, and had knocked.

“Come in,” said Hildegard, almost gayly. “I am not so ill as you suppose !”

“I am very glad to hear it,” said Hamilton, entering as he spoke.

"I—I—expected papa," said Hildegarde, blushing deeply.

"I more than half suspected the permission to enter was not intended for me," said Hamilton, "but I really cannot leave you without having obtained pardon for having offended you last night. I cannot quit you for so long a time, without the certainty of your forgiveness."

"It is granted—or rather I have nothing to forgive," replied Hildegarde, "for you were quite right not to listen to my confession, though I remained up on purpose to favour you with it." She had become very pale while speaking, and Hamilton was forcibly reminded of all her long and unwearied attentions to him during his illness. He wondered how he could ever, even for a moment, have forgotten them, and remained lost in thought, until, slightly pointing towards the door, she wished him a pleasant journey and much amusement. Instead of obeying the sign, he walked directly forward, saying, "You must not expect me to believe that I am forgiven until you have told me all I refused to hear yesterday evening."

"How very unconscionable you are," she said, with a faint smile. "When, however, I tell you that I wish you to leave my room, that I am too ill to talk, I am sure you——"

"Oh, of course, of course," said Hamilton, quite aware of the reasonableness of her demand. "Only one thing you must tell me, and that is,

what you said to Raimund which could induce him to threaten to kill himself."

"Do not ask me," said Hildegarde, uneasily.

"But that is exactly what I insist upon knowing," persisted Hamilton.

"You said you came to ask forgiveness, but it seems you have fallen into your usual habit of commanding, and——"

"I do not command," cried Hamilton, interrupting her, "I do not command; but," he added, in a very low voice, and approaching still nearer, "I entreat, I entreat you to tell me what you said to him."

"I reminded him that he was betrothed to my friend," began Hildegarde, slowly and unwillingly.

"Well, well; and then——"

"And then—I said—I could not like him otherwise than as a—cousin."

"But surely, situated as he is, he must have expected just such an answer from you. Were he free and independent, you would probably have spoken differently. Did you not console him by telling him so?"

Hildegarde remained silent, her eyes almost closed.

"And if you told him that," continued Hamilton, "there was no possible excuse for the dagger-scene; he might have been despairing, but not desperate, on such an occasion. Tell me, Hildegarde, did you say that?"

"No," she replied, almost in a whisper, "no; for though I admire Oscar, I do not love him at all."

"Then you must have said something else!"

"You are worrying me," she murmured, with an expression of pain.

"I see I am," cried Hamilton. "Forgive me, but I must ask one question more. Did he not ask you if you loved another?"

"Yes," said Hildegarde, turning away her face, which was once more covered with blushes.

"And you acknowledged?"

"I acknowledged. I confessed my folly, to put an end to the wildest ravings, and most impracticable schemes imaginable."

"And you named the object of your preference?"

"Oh, no, no, no!"

"Hildegarde," cried Hamilton, hurriedly, "tell me at once—answer me quickly, have you chosen Zedwitz?"

Hildegarde turned still more away, but did not answer.

"I understand your silence. You have chosen well—and," he added, after a slight struggle, "wisely."

Hildegarde made an impatient gesture with her hand.

"Do not mistake me," he continued, eagerly; "I am convinced your choice has not in the least been influenced by interested motives."

Zedwitz is in every respect worthy of your regard."

Hildegarde raised herself quickly on her elbow, and seemed about to speak, but the words died on her lips when she perceived Crescenz, who had, as usual, entered the room noiselessly, standing between them. She shrank back, her colour changed several times with frightful rapidity, but her voice, though faint, was perfectly calm as she requested her sister to close the window-shutters, and every trace of emotion disappeared as her father entering, seated himself beside her bed, and observed that she looked more like a marble statue than a living person.

Hamilton was at the moment unable to articulate ; he shook Mr. Rosenberg's hand, and left the room precipitately. In the drawing-room he found the Doctor assuring Madame Rosenberg that Mademoiselle Hildegarde would be perfectly well in a day or two. Hamilton, nevertheless, requested her to write to him, and having obtained a promise, he began to hurry Zedwitz's departure.

"Does your servant not go with us, Hamilton?" asked Zedwitz.

"He is to follow with Madame Rosenberg's letter to-morrow. Be sure to bring the letter, Hans!" said Hamilton, as he wrapped himself in his cloak, and sank back in the corner of the carriage.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE LONG DAY.

HAMILTON could not help feeling flattered at the evident pleasure which his return caused to every member of the Rosenberg family. The two little boys began immediately to tell him that the Christmas-tree was expected the next day. Gustle said that he had written a list of all the toys he wished for, had placed it under his pillow, and that the little child Christ had come for it and carried it off ; "So, you see, I must have been very good, or he would not have taken the list, and I shall get all the things I wrote for."

"And," said Peppy, "mamma met the infant Christ in the Ludwig street, and he asked if I had been a good child, and when mamma said yes, he promised to fly into the nursery to-morrow evening and light the candles, and bring me a gun, and a cart, and *bon-bons*, and ginger-bread."

"To-morrow is Christmas-eve," said Madame Rosenberg, "a great day with us. Captain Smith told me that you do not celebrate it in the same manner as we do. As to Gustle," she added in a whisper, "he is a cunning little fellow, and only half believes what he says, but Peppy has still all the innocent faith of childhood. I, for my own part, firmly believed that Jesus gave

me all my Christmas presents until I was nearly ten years old ; but children now are not so easily made to believe what we say."

"I don't quite like this idea," said Hamilton. "Speaking in this way seems to me to be irreverent, and must oblige you to tell the children a number of untruths."

"Ah, bah !" cried Madame Rosenberg, laughing, "you are all too particular in this respect."

"I think," said her husband, "that as long as they *can* believe it, they may, and when they cease to do so, they naturally think that it is God who has given us the means of gratifying their wishes, and so the gifts after all come from him."

"Oh, how I enjoy the idea of my Christmas-tree this year," exclaimed Crescenz.

"Of course you do," said Madame Rosenberg, "as you know that you will get so many presents. The Major returns to-morrow in order to give you the gold chain and topaz ornaments he promised you, and perhaps he may bring something of his sister's for you from Nuremberg."

"And what do you expect to get ?" said Hamilton, turning to Hildegarde.

"I don't know," she replied, looking with a smile towards her father, "but I have a sort of idea that I shall get my first ball dress and some books. Mamma has promised me a tree for myself, so perhaps I shall give you some of my *bon-bons*."

"How I wish to-morrow were come!" cried Gustle.

"I wish dinner were on the table," said Mr. Rosenberg, "although we get nothing now but veal to eat, which my wife considers as a sort of preservative against cholera."

"You are just as much afraid of cholera as I am, Franz," she said, and then added in a whisper to Hamilton, "He laughs at me, but he takes drops and pills every night. While you were at Edelhof, we had some scenes which would, perhaps, have alarmed you. First, I thought I had got the cholera, but it was only some fat of roast lamb which had disagreed with me. Then the cook made herself ill by eating the apples which I had given her that the children might not ask for them. Then Peppy——"

"Dinner is on the table," cried old Hans, merely putting his grey head into the room.

"That's right," cried Mr. Rosenberg, "and now I request that the cholera be no more named among us. A fine of six kreutzers for every time the word is said."

"Oh, as to not saying the word 'cholera,'" began his wife.

"A fine, a fine," cried Mr. Rosenberg; "the money shall be put into a box and given to the poor."

"Oh, dear," exclaimed Crescenz, "I must take great care, or all my pocket-money will be spent on the cho——"

Hildegarde's hand was on her mouth before the word was pronounced. The little boys clapped their hands, Hamilton laughed, and Mr. Rosenberg said he was sure that his wife and Crescenz would prove themselves the most charitable by their contributions.

The next morning Hamilton spent in choosing his presents ; he was for some time exceedingly puzzled, and wavered long between books and bronze, glass and gold ; at length he recollected having heard Hildegarde once say that she wished for nothing in this world so much as a little watch, but that she feared she never would be in possession of one. This decided at once his doubts, and as the others interested him less, he had soon completed his purchases with a large box of toys for the children.

On his return, he found Fritz at home for the holidays ; he was sitting at the drawing-room window with his brothers, all three yawning and looking most melancholy. "What o'clock is it?" was the exclamation as he entered.

"Four o'clock," said Hamilton ; "but why do you look so sorrowful?"

"Two whole hours to wait," sighed Fritz.

"Two long hours," yawned Gustle.

"Two hours before the angel comes to light the candles and ring the bell," said Peppy.

"Pshaw, mamma might light the candles at five o'clock ; it will be dark enough, I am sure," said Fritz, in a whisper to Hamilton.

"Where are your sisters?"

"They are with mamma, hanging the *bon-bons* and fastening the wax tapers on the trees, I suppose; but when the presents are being brought in they will be sent off too, though Crescenz thinks herself old enough to light the candles, and do everything."

"In what room are they?"

"In the school-room, but you need not expect to get in; both doors are locked."

"What do you think the little child Jesus will send you?" asked Peppy, approaching Hamilton confidentially. "Did you, too, put a list under your pillow, like Gustle? Next year, if I can write, I shall ask for so many things. Trumpets, and drums, and harlequins. What do you think you will get?"

"*Bon-bons*, probably."

"And something else, too," said Gustle, nodding his head.

"You promised not to tell," cried Fritz, threateningly approaching his brother.

"Don't you think," cried Gustle, boldly, "that because you wear a uniform, I'm afraid of you. I'll tell what I like——"

Fritz caught him by the collar, Gustle threw off his arm, and a considerable scuffle ensued.

"Hildegarde has not finished the travelling-bag," shouted Gustle, angrily, "and papa says it is just as well, as it was not a civil sort of present."

At this moment Hildegarde and Crescenz entered the room.

"Turned out ! turned out !" cried Fritz and Gustle, unanimously joining in the attack on their sisters.

Hildegarde smiled, Crescenz grew red, and observed that everything was ready ; there was nothing more to be done.

"Turned out all the same," said Fritz, "though you are nearly sixteen, and going to be married. Ha ! ha ! ha !"

"You are very ill-natured, Fritz, always talking of my going to be married, though you know I dislike its being spoken of."

"Not you ! Did n't I see you playing grand with Lina Berger when I was at home last Sunday ? You both seemed to consider Hildegarde beneath your notice, and she is worth a dozen such as you, and a hundred such as Lina Berger."

"I was learning to make a new kind of purse."

"As if I did not know the purses were all made ! No, you were talking of old Count Zedwitz, who was so ill that the Doctor had to visit him at his castle. I heard all you said, and understood you, too, though you spoke French."

Crescenz blushed deeply. Hildegarde became very pale, turned suddenly to her sister, and said, in a scarcely audible voice, "Crescenz, you surely have not had the cruelty to explain to Lina Berger, or gratify her curiosity ?"

"Lina suspected almost everything, and asked me so many questions that I did not know what to say. You forget that the Doctor was sent for, and that the old Count was ill from mental agitation ; I dare say he told him everything."

"What he left untold you have supplied. It is the last time I shall ever confide in you."

"Don't be angry, Hildegarde," cried Crescenz, with tears in her eyes ; "surely it is no disgrace to you that such a man as Count Zedwitz wished to——"

"Silence !" cried Hildegarde, sternly, "and never mention his name again."

"Whew," whistled Fritz ; "Hildegarde is in a passion ; look at her eyes ! Fight it out, Cressy, and then make it up again !"

But Crescenz threw herself on her knees before her sister, and, seizing her hands, faltered, "Oh, Hildegarde, forgive me ; I have done wrong, but you know that Lina always makes me do as she pleases. Forgive me—only say that you forgive me this time !"

"I forgive you," said Hildegarde, "but I never can trust you again."

The sound of Madame Rosenberg's voice speaking to Major Stultz in the adjoining room made Crescenz spring up and follow the children, who ran to meet him.

Hamilton looked at Hildegarde, but did not utter a word. Every feature of her face expressed intense annoyance, as she slowly turned

to the window and leaned her head against it. The greetings in the next room were cordial ; the children boisterously reminded Major Stultz of the presents which he had promised to bring them from Nuremberg.

"They are come or coming," he answered ; "I had them all packed up ; and only think, the infant Christ met me on my way here, took them all from me, and promised to place them all under the Christmas-tree this evening himself."

"Well," cried Fritz, "I must say that this 24th of December is the very longest day in the whole year."

"And yet it is generally supposed to be one of the shortest," said Major Stultz, laughing ; he advanced towards Hamilton and shook his hand,

"You are a new arrival as well as myself, I hear. All my people in Nuremberg tried to persuade me to stay there in order to be out of the way of the cholera, and they would, perhaps, have succeeded, had not my impatience to see Crescenz again been so great ; besides, I hope to hurry matters by my presence, and that in about a fortnight at furthest, Madame Rosenberg——"

"I have no objection, my dear Major, but Franz has taken it into his head that Crescenz ought to wait until after her birthday, and go to one ball with her sister before her marriage. We do not yet know when the first museum ball will take place."

"Pooh, nonsense ! She can go to the ball af-

ter our marriage, just as well as before it ; eh, Crescenz ? ”

Crescenz smiled unmeaningly, and Hildegarde turned the conversation by telling her mother that the Hoffmanns had requested permission to come to the Christmas-tree in the evening, to see the presents.

“ You have invited them, of course. The Bergers are coming too, and old Madame Lustig ; I invited her because I intend to ask her to take charge of you all some day next month, as I have promised to visit my father at the iron-works ; besides, she has taken a deal of trouble about workwomen for Crescenz, and all that sort of thing ; I expect her to offer to stay here to-night, and take care of the children until we return from the midnight mass. I hope, Major, you can remain awake until twelve o’clock.”

“ In Crescenz’s society I can answer for myself ; otherwise I must say I consider nine o’clock as the most rational hour for retiring to rest.”

“ But you will go with us to hear the high mass at midnight, won’t you ? ”

“ Oh, of course.”

“ Come, girls, assist me to arrange the tea things ; we will not, however, employ Mr. Hamilton to make tea this time, but he may help to carry the long table out of the next room for us.”

Hamilton and Major Stultz carried in the table, and everything was soon arranged for the expected guests.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE CHRISTMAS-TREE, AND MIDNIGHT MASS.

THE Hoffmanns arrived, and with them Count Raimund. Hamilton watched Hildegarde's reception of the latter, and forgetting the three weeks he had passed at Edelhof, was surprised to find that she met her cousin without the slightest embarrassment; he perceived, too, that Raimund had contrived to ingratiate himself with Madame Rosenberg; she greeted him with a familiar nod, as he entered, and the children's manner (no bad test of intimacy) convinced him that Raimund's visits must have been numerous during his absence. Fritz smiled saucily, and raised his hand to his forehead in military salute; Gustle, with his usual rudeness, seized his coat, and began to swing himself backwards and forwards by it: while Peppy took possession of the unbuckled sword, and rode round the room upon it, until his mother, irritated by the noise, forcibly took it from him, and shoving him with his brother Gustle into the next room, declared that if they were so ill-behaved, the infant Christ would pass by their house, and they would get neither Christmas-boxes nor *bon-bons*. "Do you know," she said, turning to Count Raimund, "that Mr. Hamilton is quite shocked at my telling the children such stories? He says——" but the entrance of the Bergers

and Madame Lustig gave her thoughts another direction. The latter was a red-faced, stout, jolly-looking widow of at least fifty years of age ; her nose was extremely thick, and her forehead extremely low ; she seemed very glad to see everybody, and made tremendously low curtsies in all directions. Madame Berger immediately took possession of Hamilton, saying that she had a lot of messages to deliver from Theodor Biedermann.

“ I hope he intends to come here to-morrow ; I shall be glad to see him, and commence my studies again.”

“ If we may believe him,” said Madame Berger, laughing, “ Hildegarde has made great progress during your absence ; he says she writes German as well as French now, and that is saying a good deal ; but he complained bitterly of the noise which the children made while he was giving his lessons, and regretted the tranquillity of your room. Of course, I reminded him of the day I found you fencing ! ”

“ Our lesson was over when you arrived ; I assure you we were always exceedingly attentive and well-behaved.”

“ And Hildegarde sitting there reading, as if she were quite alone. By-the-by, have you begun your English studies with her again ? ”

“ Not yet ; but I am quite ready, if she feels disposed.”

“ You intend, perhaps, to enter the ranks of her adorers ? ”

"I only aspire to being among her friends at present."

"But I can tell you she will not be satisfied with anything less than the most unlimited devotion."

"I dare say she will find people enough willing to comply with her demands."

"Do you think so? If everything ends like the Zedwitz affair, it would be better if she turned her mind to something rational. You know," she added, lowering her voice confidentially, "you know that at Seon, and also here, she encouraged Count Max Zedwitz in every possible manner; met him in the cloisters, and sat beside him at table every day at Seon, and here let him know every time she went on a walking party——"

"I think," said Hamilton, "you are rather mistaken in supposing that she——"

"Oh, I am not at all mistaken. She made him, in the most artful, deliberate manner, so in love that he actually took it into his head to marry her. Such an idea, you know! And his father a knight of St. George, and all that."

"I was not aware that his father being a knight of St. George could make any difference."

"What! When they can prove sixteen noble generations on both sides! When Count Max can become a knight of St. George whenever he pleases! When marrying a person who is not

noble would deprive his children and children's children of the right of claiming an order which can be obtained on no other terms."

"Ah, I understand."

"Hildegarde," continued Madame Berger, "was always desperately proud, and her greatest ambition is to marry some one of rank. A man must be a count or baron at least before she thinks him worthy of her notice. Now, such a man as Count Zedwitz was just what she wished, and she persuaded him to write a letter making her a formal offer of his hand ; this she exhibited in triumph to her father, who, however, had received about the same time from the old Count a most furious epistle, telling him that his son's fortune and rank entitled him to look for a wife among the first families in Germany—that a marriage with Mademoiselle Rosenberg now, or at any future period, was totally out of the question. He supposed that Mr. Rosenberg would not desire any other sort of connection for his daughter, and therefore had better join him in putting an end to any further intimacy. This, with a few other impertinences of the same description, made even good, quiet Mr. Rosenberg outrageous, and he insisted on Hildegarde's refusing Count Max—if that be called a refusal where marriage was a chimera !"

"Not so much a chimera as you imagine," said Hamilton, "for Zedwitz had procured the necessary security—as I happen to know, for he

himself told me so at Edelhof—and his father cannot disinherit him.”

“So ! Well, if that be the case, Mr. Rosenberg might as well have pocketed the affront—namely, the letter, and let his daughter marry him. Perhaps, after his anger has cooled, he may wish he had acted differently, or at least wish that he had left an opening for a renewal of the affair.”

“Hildegarde has made a great sacrifice to please her father,” observed Hamilton.

“Not so great as you suppose ; for Crescenz told me that she was quite as angry as her father about the letter.”

“Of that I have no doubt ; but, nevertheless, the sacrifice was great.”

“You mean on account of his rank, or the fortune which his miserly old father is always increasing ? Hildegarde has such an exalted idea of her beauty that she imagines she can find a Count Zedwitz whenever she pleases. Crescenz says she took the whole business very coolly after the first burst of anger was over. When Count Zedwitz had left, her father, as usual, praised her conduct extravagantly, and, with tears in his eyes, thanked her for her compliance with his wishes. What do you think she did ? Told him in her customary ungracious manner that she did not deserve either his praises or thanks, for that it had caused her no great effort to dismiss Count Zedwitz ! ”

"Extraordinary — inexplicable girl!" murmured Hamilton.

"Not at all," cried Madame Berger, colouring, "not at all; for, added to her pride, she is naturally violent and has strong passions. I am convinced she will never marry anyone who is not of rank, but it is both possible and probable that she may take it into her head to fall desperately in love with some one whom she considers beneath her. I have strong suspicion that she has done so, and that Theodor Biedermann is the favoured individual."

"Biedermann!" repeated Hamilton, amazed.

"Yes, Theodor Biedermann; but with him she will find all her arts and vehemence useless. He scarcely even allows her to be good-looking!"

"I think you are altogether mistaken about her," began Hamilton. "I never perceived the slightest——"

"You have been absent more than three weeks," said Madame Berger, interrupting him. "If I have made a right guess, Hildegarde will receive a severe lesson, which I hope may be of use to her!"

"How do you mean?"

"I mean that Theodor will treat her love with the scorn which it deserves."

Hamilton shook his head and laughed—rather ironically.

"How long are we to continue in the dark?" asked Mr. Rosenberg from the other end of the

room. "Pray, Babette, let us have at least a pair of candles, that we may not be blinded when your tree dazzles our astonished eyes!"

The candles were unwillingly granted, and Madame Rosenberg left the room mysteriously with Madame Lustig.

"Come here, boys," cried Mr. Rosenberg. "Let us take our station near the door, that we may enter first."

Doctor Berger came towards Hamilton, and began a conversation about the different ways of celebrating Christmas in different countries, and the habit of giving presents at that time or on New Year's Day, while Hamilton's eyes involuntarily strayed towards Hildegarde, who, sitting at the other end of the room with Count Raimund and Mademoiselle de Hoffmann, was speaking eagerly with the latter, all unconscious that her cousin was gazing at her with an emotion which his sanguine temperament betrayed in rapid changes of colour, although he did not seem to take any part in the conversation.

At length a bell was rung, and the door thrown open which led to the school-room. The children rushed forward with shouts of joy, followed, somewhat tumultuously, by their father and his guests. Hamilton was the last, and had more time to prepare his eyes for the blaze of light which they had to encounter. In the middle of the room was a large round table, on which was placed a tall fir tree, hung with a profusion of

bon-bons, of the most varied colours, and sparkling like gems as they reflected the light of the hundreds of wax tapers which were fastened on the dark green branches in their vicinity. On the top of the tree was a diminutive angel, dressed in gold and silver ; in the moss which covered the root was a wax infant, surrounded by lambs. The table itself was covered with toys of every description, from drawing-books and boxes for Fritz, to drums and trumpets for Peppy. There were two other tables with smaller trees, to which Madame Rosenberg conducted Hildegarde and Crescenz. The noise was excessive ; everyone spoke and nobody listened. Old Hans and the cook were not forgotten ; they stood, with their Christmas-boxes and pockets of gingerbread, laughing spectators near the door.

Hamilton received a cigar-case from Madame Rosenberg, which she had worked most elaborately for him during his absence, and from Crescenz a scarlet purse, glittering with steel beads ; this he particularly admired, while Major Stultz told him he was half inclined to be jealous, it was so much prettier than the one which she had made for him. The presents which Hamilton offered in return were accepted with the best grace imaginable, and he now amused himself watching Crescenz's face, as she opened the various parcels and inspected the contents of the numerous boxes and caskets on her table. Some

natural disappointment was at times legible when, instead of the expected jewels, respectable rows of forks and spoons met her eager eyes ; but at length a case of red morocco disclosed such treasures, that Hamilton, after having listened to her expressions of rapture for a few minutes, moved towards Hildegarde, who stood before her table turning over the leaves of some books, which had been placed beside the expected ball-dress and wreath of roses.

"I have nothing to offer you," she said, slightly blushing as he approached, "nothing but some *bon-bons*," and she began to untie some from her tree as she spoke.

Hamilton took them, and with unusual diffidence, presented the case containing the watch. She had no sooner opened it, than she blushed excessively, and endeavouring to replace it in his hands—failing in her endeavour, she put it on the table, saying, "Mr. Hamilton, I cannot possibly accept anything of such value."

"Your mother and sister have not pained me by making any difficulties," he said, reproachfully.

"Then you must have given them something very different."

This was undeniable, and Hamilton was silent. Mr. Rosenberg came to his daughter's assistance, to Hamilton's annoyance agreed with her, and "hoped the watch was not definitely purchased."

"Of course it is," said Hamilton ; "I never dreamed of such a trifling thing being refused."

"It is only trifling in size," said Mr. Rosenberg holding it toward his wife, who had joined them. "Fortunately, however, a watch will be quite as useful to you as to Hildegarde, as you can use it yourself."

"But unfortunately, I have already two, one which I received from my uncle, and one from my mother," said Hamilton, in a tone of great vexation.

"If that be the case," said Madame Rosenberg, in a low voice to her husband, "perhaps——"

"Babette!" he exclaimed, "you don't know the value of such a watch as this!"

"Englishmen do not consider value as we do—I only thought if Mr. Hamilton had really bought it for Hildegarde, and cannot use it himself, it will be ungracious if she refuses it."

"Very ungracious, indeed!" cried Hamilton eagerly.

Madame Rosenberg drew her husband aside, and began a whispered discussion. Hildegarde leaned against her table in painful embarrassment, while Hamilton quietly withdrew from his pocket a long gold chain which he had not before ventured to produce, and attached it to the watch.

"I shall not be allowed to accept it," said Hildegarde, shaking her head.

"You will," said Hamilton.

He was right; her father, in a reluctant, half-annoyed manner, gave his consent. "Thank you! Oh, thank you!" cried Hamilton, with

such warmth that Madame Berger came skipping from the other side of the room, exclaiming, "I positively must know what Hildegarde has given you ; you seem so uncommonly pleased !"

"That is a secret," said Hamilton, laughingly turning away, while she pursued him with guesses.

"It is not the half-finished travelling-bag, at all events, for you could not put that into your pocket. Nor is it a purse, or a cigar-case. Oh, I know, a pair of slippers, or a portfolio worked on canvas ! You may as well tell me, for I shall hear at all events from Crescenz ! Have you seen what splendid ornaments the Major has given her ? And the three bracelets ? And then such droves of coffee-spoons as her god-mother has sent her from Augsburg—and Cressy is so childish that she does not care in the least for spoons ?"

Madame Rosenberg went round the room distributing *bon-bons* and trifling presents, which sometimes caused amusement when they contained an allusion to well-known foibles or peculiarities. The tapers on the tree were nearly burned out. Mr. Rosenberg desired old Hans to extinguish them, and having placed candles on the table, the children were left to play with their newly-acquired treasures, and the rest of the party adjourned to the drawing-room.

Everyone seemed happy excepting Raimund, who, with a flushed face and contracted brow, took the place assigned him beside his betrothed,

and poured into her ear at intervals his discontented observations ; her good-humoured laughing answers appearing to act like fuel on the malevolent fire burning within him. At length he suddenly started from his chair, and pleading business of importance at the barracks, he left the room with little ceremony, and negligently trailed his sword after him along the corridor.

"Well," said Madame Rosenberg, as she carved a prettily-decorated cake into neat slices ; "well, we can do without him, now that the Major is here to take his place at whist or taroc, but I cannot conceive what has put him out of temper !"

"Who is out of temper ?" asked Madame de Hoffmann, who, as usual, had only heard the last words.

"Nobody, mamma," answered her daughter quickly. "Poor Oscar," she added, turning to Hildegarde ; "I believe he is annoyed at not being able to give such presents as your sister has received from Major Stultz. It would have been better had we not come to your Christmas fête ; I had no idea it would be so splendid."

"That is a fancy which papa and mamma have in common," answered Hildegarde, "Crescenz being a bride has made our Christmas unusually brilliant, I suppose. I dare say, however, your tree was very handsome. Why did you not invite us to see it ?"

"Oscar did not wish it—and he forbade my saying that this bracelet was from him, when

Crescenz showed me hers. I hope he does not think I expected or wished for such presents as she has received ! By-the-by, dear, do tell your mother not to make any remarks when he is a little odd at times ; for mamma, who, you know, at first so wished and promoted our marriage, has lately been endeavouring, under all sorts of pretences, to break it off. If it were not for Oscar's father's extraordinary patience with her, I do believe our engagement would be at an end at once. I dare not tell her how sombre and dissatisfied he has become of late ; she would attribute it to the supposed preference for you, which I cannot persuade her is an absurdity, although she begins to see that it is not returned on your part. Madame Berger has been endeavouring to enlighten her——”

“ By telling her something very ill-natured of me, most probably,” said Hildegarde, colouring.

“ She told us a long story about that good-natured Count Zedwitz this morning, of which I do not believe anything, excepting that he wished to marry you, and that his family perhaps were opposed to the match ; and she ended by saying that you had taken a fancy to that young student, Biedermann, who is giving you lessons in German.”

“ Just like her ! ” exclaimed Hildegarde, indignantly.

“ Oscar, who was present, laughed excessively ; indeed he was so amused at her chattering, that

he became quite gay, and was more amiable than I have known him for a long time, until he came here and saw Crescenz's bracelets, and that watch which Mr. Hamilton gave you."

Hildegarde bent down her head to hide a blush of which she was but too conscious. "I have no intention of keeping the watch longer than this evening," she said, after a thoughtful pause; "it is a much too valuable present to accept from a—a stranger—but that is of no consequence to Oscar, who might easily have found some better employment than laughing at me with Lina Berger!"

"My dear creature, he was laughing at her! He says she was jealous about that little Biedermann!"

"Pshaw!" cried Hildegarde, impatiently.

"Will you not at least tell me the true state of the case about Count Zedwitz?"

"Not now—not now, Marie—in fact I never wish to mention the subject again," said Hildegarde, arising abruptly and going towards the door, which, however, she had no sooner reached, than she was recalled by her mother, and desired to carry round the cake to the expectant company, who had been already supplied with weak tea strongly perfumed with vanilla.

Hamilton was so occupied by Madame Berger, that he did not observe Hildegarde as she passed him; his companion's eyes followed her for some time furtively, and then turning to him she observed with a laugh, "Did you not see how Hil-

degarde's hand trembled as she offered us the cake? I am sure she has been in a passion, though I cannot imagine about what, as she has only been speaking with her friend Mademoiselle de Hoffmann! Berger has become physician to the Hoffmanns ever since your illness; they took such a fancy to him, and are so civil to me, that I often visit them now. By-the-by, that Count Raimund is charming, but he does not seem to care in the least for his betrothed, who certainly is not at all pretty. She did not look half pleased at his talking so much to me this morning! A little pug-faced person such as she is has no sort of right to be jealous, you know, and the sooner she learns to bear his paying attentions to other women the better!"

"How kind of you to give her such a lesson?"

"I see, by your manner, that you think me ill-natured," said Madame Berger.

"Or malicious!" said Hamilton.

"Perhaps I was a little," said Madame Berger, with an affectation of repentive pensiveness.

"After all, Mademoiselle de Hoffmann is a good-natured, a most inoffensive person!"

"She is sensible and well-informed too," said Hamilton, warmly.

"You take your opinion from Hildegarde, who you know has no medium. Pray don't ask her what she thinks of me, that's all. See, she will not offer us any cake this time, because we took no notice of her when she passed before."

"I did not see her," said Hamilton ; "I believe I was admiring the ring which you told me had been given you by one of the Doctor's patients."

"But the ring was still on my finger, and perhaps she thought——"

"What?" asked Hamilton, laughing, as he followed Hildegarde, and obtained the piece of cake which he requested. Madame Lustig, who did not perceive his vicinity, observed to Dr. Berger, "Your wife is getting on at a great rate with that young Englishman to-night."

"It's a way she has," he replied, shugging his shoulders, "opposition only makes her worse, so I generally pretend not to see her. At all events, I have discovered long ago, that the Englishman's heart and thoughts are elsewhere, even when he is apparently completely engrossed in my Lina."

Hamilton looked at Hildegarde, and thought he perceived something like a smile playing round the corners of her mouth, as she turned away—he walked slowly to his seat, and began to eat his cake with an earnestness which soon became offensive to his lively neighbour.

"I suppose she forbade you talking any more to me?" she observed, after some time.

"Do you mean Madame Lustig?"

"Madame Fiddlestick!—you know I mean Hildegarde."

"She did not speak to me."

"Perhaps a look was sufficient?"

"She did not look at me."

"But you looked at her?"

"Undoubtedly—I like looking at her—and at you, too, if you have no objection."

"I see I shall be obliged to complain of you to the Doctor—and I tell you he is horribly jealous at times!"

"How very considerate of him to stand with his back to us all this time," said Hamilton, laughing, "one would almost think he did it on purpose! But see, the children are coming to say good night, and the Hoffmanns seem to be going——"

"I suppose the Doctor will insist on my going, too!" said Madame Berger; "he has no sort of consideration for me, and the idea will never enter his old head, that I should like to go to the midnight mass with you—all."

The Doctor did insist, and the company departed together. Mr. Rosenberg at once declared his intention to go to bed; his wife said she would doze on the sofa until it was time to go to church; Major Stultz placed himself, as usual, beside Crescenz and her work-basket, and began a whispered conversation, which, however, in time perceptibly flagged, for Crescenz's fingers moved more quickly than her tongue—the monotony of his own voice on the otherwise unbroken stillness in the room naturally produced drowsiness, with which the Major long

and valiantly combated—but it was in vain he endeavoured to sit bolt upright in his chair, occasionally staring wildly around him. After having made a succession of sleepy obeisances, of such profundity that Crescenz's demure smile almost verged into laughter, his arms sank at length heavily on his outspread legs, his head sought support on the uncomfortable low back of his chair, his jaw fell, and the long-drawn breathing degenerated into snores both loud and long.

Such influence had Hildegarde acquired over Hamilton, that the fear of incurring her displeasure prevented him from laughing aloud, or at first even looking up; after some time, however, pressing his lips firmly against his book, his eyes glanced over it with a mixed expression of mirth and curiosity, from one sister to the other. Crescenz seemed embarrassed, but there was not a particle of either dislike or impatience in the look which she bestowed on the sleeper. She bent towards her sister, and said in a whisper, "If I could manage to put a sofa cushion on the back of the chair!"

"An excellent idea," said Hildegarde, taking up one, and preparing to assist her.

"Give me the cushion, and do you move his head," said Crescenz, timidly.

"No, dear, that is your office," replied her sister, half laughing.

"But if he should wake," cried Crescenz, drawing back."

"He will scarcely be angry," said Hildegarde, approaching with the cushion.

Crescenz took it from her, and began to insinuate it between his head and the chair—her movements were so gentle that she succeeded without awakening him—his mouth closed with a slight jerk, while uttering a grunt of sleepy satisfaction, as his chin dropped on his breast.

Nothing could be less attractive than Major Stultz's face at this moment, with his puffed-out crimson cheeks and wrinkled double chin—but Crescenz saw him not; with a good-humoured smile she tried to arrange still better the supporting cushion, and then stood behind him with all the immovable serenity of a Caryatide. Hildegarde walked to the window, and holding her hands at each side of her temples, endeavoured to look out into the darkness. "We shall have rain, I fear," she observed to Hamilton, who had followed her.

He opened the window—it was a cold, cheerless night, the flickering lamps throwing unsteady gleams of light across the street.

"The weather is not very inviting," said Hildegarde, drawing back into the warm room with a slight shudder.

Hamilton leaned out for some time in silence, and then whispered—"Who is that?" He pointed to the opposite side of the street, where a figure, muffled in a cloak, had been standing opposite the house, and now began

to walk quickly away. "Do you know who that was?"

"I think it was Count Zedwitz," answered Hildegarde.

"You knew he was there? You came to the window to see him?"

"No," said Hildegarde, quietly.

"Then how could you know him so directly?"

"I recognised the cloak he used to wear at Seon."

"Ah—yes—true—poor fellow!" said Hamilton.

"How inclined you are to suspect me!" said Hildegarde, reproachfully.

"One might suspect, without blaming you, for giving Zedwitz a gleam of hope to lighten his despair."

"I should blame myself, for it would be unpardonable coquetry!"

"Coquetry! when you really love him!"

"Love him!" repeated Hildegarde, hastily—"No—yes—that is, I like him—I like him very much."

At this moment the church bells in Munich began simultaneously to send forth loud peals. Madame Rosenberg raised herself on her pillow, and exclaimed: "What are you about, Hildegarde? Shut the window, and don't let the cold night air into the room."

Hamilton closed the window. When he looked round he perceived Major Stultz with the sofa-

cushion on his knees, offering a profusion of thanks to Crescenz, who stood smiling beside him.

In a few minutes they were on their way to the Frauen church. It was crowded to excess, and brilliantly lighted, chiefly by the number of wax tapers which had been brought with the prayer books, and now burned brightly before each kneeling or sitting figure.

The music was excellent : and as Hamilton soon observed that extraordinary devotion was chiefly practised by the female part of the congregation who occupied the pews, and that those in his vicinity who stood in the aisle amused themselves by looking around them in all directions, he by degrees followed their example, and his tall figure enabling him to overlook the sea of heads about him, he gratified his curiosity to the fullest extent. He observed that Crescenz's eyes stole not unfrequently over her prayerbook to bestow a furtive glance on him or on Major Stultz who stood near her, but Hildegarde was immovable—her profound devotion surprised him. She spoke so much less of religion than her sister, that he had come to the erroneous conclusion that she was less religious. The burning taper threw a strong light on her bent head and clasped hands ; and as he suddenly recollected some remark of Zedwitz's about the Madonna-like expression of her regular features, he unconsciously turned to seek his friend, to ask him when and where he had so spoken. His astonishment was

lost in emotion on perceiving that Zedwitz was actually not far distant from him, his whole appearance wild and disordered, his haggard eyes fixed on Hildegarde's motionless figure. The service ended, she closed her book, and rose calmly, while Madame Rosenberg extinguished the three tapers and deposited them in her reticule. As the lights one after another disappeared, there was a universal move towards the nearest doors. Hamilton was about to follow the Rosenbergs when he felt himself drawn in a contrary direction by a powerful arm, and Zedwitz whispered, "One word before you go home ;" and they were soon brought outside the church with the crowd. It was raining torrents ; and several persons attempted to return again into the aisle, while they despatched messengers or servants for umbrellas. The carriages rolled rapidly away in all directions, and Hamilton in a few minutes was walking with his friend under the leafless trees in the promenade *platz*.

"I am ill," said Zedwitz, "really ill—this sort of life is not to be endured—I shall get a fever, or go mad, if I remain here."

"You do look ill," said Hamilton, "and change of air and scene might be of use to you—but is it advisable to remain out in this rain if you are feverish?"

"Certainly not advisable—but I cannot set out on my travels without taking leave of you."

"Travels ! where do you mean to go?"

“To Paris—or Rome—or Athens—or Jerusalem.”

“Will your father consent?”

“I think so. To-morrow I intend to go to Lengheim and commence negotiations—I have determined on quitting the army at all events; for I have no fancy for country quarters, and as to remaining in Munich, the thing is impossible. What are all my resolutions when I see her? and see her I do—continually—although unseen by her, or any of her family.”

“You were in the street this evening, I know. She recognised your cloak immediately.”

“My cloak, ah! very true—I must have another—adieu, Hamilton, I will not detain you longer in the rain—we shall scarcely meet again before I leave——”

“Write to me then,” said Hamilton. “I should like to know where you are to be found. Perhaps I may join you in the spring.”

“You shall hear from me,” cried Zedwitz, seizing his hand and holding it firmly. “One word more—promise me to act honourably by Hildegarde, and not to take advantage of her isolated situation when her sister has left the house.”

“I have never thought of acting otherwise,” replied Hamilton, calmly.

“I suppose I must be satisfied with this answer,” said Zedwitz, wringing his friend’s hand as he hurried away.

It was too late to overtake the Rosenbergs, nevertheless Hamilton walked quickly home. He was surprised to find the house-door open, the staircase perfectly dark, and several persons speaking at different distances upon it. On the third story Walburg, who was endeavouring to open the door of the Rosenbergs' apartment, was loudly assuring her mistress that when she left the house with the umbrellas the lamp had been burning—she had trimmed it on her way downstairs. Major Stultz and Crescenz were not far distant, for they occasionally laughed, and joined in the conversation. Hamilton began to grope his way along the passage; as he gained the foot of the stairs, Hildegarde, who had probably only reached the first landing-place, exclaimed: "Is that you, Mr. Hamilton? You had better wait until we have a light."

Before he had time to speak, a voice quite close to her answered for him.

"You have startled me," cried Hildegarde, "I thought you were at the foot of the stairs."

Not a little surprised to find himself in the presence of a second self, he stood still to hear what would follow.

"How did you happen to be separated from us?" asked Hildegarde.

"Met some friends at the church door, and stopped to speak to them," replied the voice in French.

"You must be completely wet!"

"Not at all."

Hildegarde laughed.

"You do not believe me ! Feel my arm—not even damp !"

A pause ensued—perhaps the arm was felt—the midnight representative lowered his voice and spoke eagerly. Hamilton advanced a few steps and heard the concluding words—"Surely, surely, if you consider me a friend, you will let me know the true state of the case. Is it friendship for Mademoiselle de Hoffmann that makes you of late avoid your cousin with, I may say, such exaggerated care ?"

"Exaggerated care !" repeated Hildegarde, with evident surprise.

"Well, well—never mind that—we have no time to weigh words just now ; but, tell me quickly, was it to please your father—or in anger—or indifference—that you refused Zedwitz ?"

"Have you any right to question me in this imperious manner ?" cried Hildegarde, moving quickly on.

"No," replied the stranger, striding after her. "No ; and it is a great relief to my mind to find that I have not. I was beginning to fear you had a—misunderstood me—would think perhaps I had trifled with your feelings : in short, I thought you were unkind to your cousin and had refused Zedwitz from having formed expectations which can never be realised. Painful as it is to me to say so, I must nevertheless tell

you that nothing was further from my thoughts than——”

“Villain !” cried Hamilton, springing forward. “How dare you take advantage of the darkness to traduce me in this manner ! Who are you ?”

A violent and silent struggle ensued, but the darkness was so complete that the stranger contrived to free himself from Hamilton’s grasp, bounded down the stairs, and closed the hall-door with such violence that the whole house shook. Hamilton would have followed, but Hildegarde’s hand grasped his arm, and she entreated him, almost breathlessly, to remain quiet. “Do not go after him ; it will serve no purpose whatever. I ought to have known,” she added, walking up the now lighted staircase, “I ought to have felt at once that it was not you !”

“It would have shown extraordinary discernment on your part,” said Hamilton, “for not only did he whisper, and choose a foreign language which he probably knows we often use, and in which you could not easily detect the difference of expression—but he also asked the very questions which I should have asked long ago, had I dared !”

Hildegarde hurried forward, while Madame Rosenberg called from the top of the stairs : “You were determined to let us know that you had shut the house-door after you, Mr. Hamilton, but I was glad to hear that you were at

home, for it is raining torrents, and, as you have neither cloak nor umbrella, you must be wet to the skin."

"I believe I am rather wet," said Hamilton, composedly allowing himself to be felt by his attentive hostess.

"Take off these clothes directly, or you will get one of your English colds."

"A cold never lasts more than a day or two here ; I am no longer afraid," said Hamilton, following her into the drawing-room in the hope of speaking a few words more with Hildegard ; but Madame Rosenberg insisted on his going to bed, and as a bribe, promised herself to bring him a piece of cake and a glass of wine.

The whole family were in the deepest sleep, and not a sound was heard in the house, when suddenly, about three o'clock in the morning, the Rosenberg bell was rung loud and violently. A great commotion ensued, and the cook having been sent downstairs to open the house-door, returned in a minute or two, preceded by Count Zedwitz's servant, who, running towards Hamilton's room, seemed only able to pronounce the word cholera.

"Who is that ?" cried Madame Rosenberg, drawing a little black shawl tightly over her shoulders, and following him with hasty steps. "What does the man mean ?"

She found him standing in Hamilton's room, explaining that his master had returned home ill

about one o'clock ; that he had gradually become worse, and had now the cholera ; he had refused to send for Mr. Hamilton, but the doctor had said some one ought to be with him, who could write to Edelfhof directly.

"I must say I think it very unnecessary that Mr. Hamilton should be exposed to any danger of the kind," interposed Madame Rosenberg. "I dare say Count Zedwitz has other friends or relatives to whom he can apply."

The man said he had not been long with Count Zedwitz—he had seen him more with Mr. Hamilton than anyone else—and then he looked inquiringly towards Hamilton, who, having sprung out of bed the moment the bell rang, had finished his hasty toilet undisturbed by the presence of Madame Rosenberg. His answer was throwing his cloak over his shoulders, and advancing towards the door.

"Surely you will not run the danger of getting the cholera, for a mere acquaintance of yesterday," she cried, anxiously placing herself before him.

"The danger is by no means so great as you suppose," said Hamilton. "I doubt the cholera being contagious."

"But I don't in the least doubt it," cried Madame Rosenberg, "and I feel quite sure you will bring it into our house. Have some consideration for us, if you have none for yourself !"

"The best plan will be not to return for a week or so," said Hamilton. "In fact, not until you let me know that you no longer fear infection. Hans must bring me whatever I require, as soon as it is daylight."

"But he must not go backwards and forwards," began Madame Rosenberg.

"Oh, mamma!" exclaimed Hildegarde, who was standing in the passage; "will you not speak to papa about it? I am sure——"

"Go to your bed," cried her mother, interrupting her testily, "and don't stand shivering there until you get the cholera, too; go to your bed. I assure you," she said, turning apologetically to Hamilton, "I assure you I don't mean to be unkind, but I have a family, and it would be awful were the cholera to come among us. Suppose I were to lose Franz, or one of my boys, or even Hildegarde——"

"Do not speak of anything so dreadful," cried Hamilton, instantly seizing the last idea. "Nothing will induce me to return until even the shadow of danger has past."

"And you do not think me ill-natured?"

"Not in the least!"

Hildegarde was at the door of her room as he was about to pass—he stopped to take leave.

"Use whatever precaution you can against infection," she said, warmly returning the pressure of his hand, "and," she added, hurriedly, "and don't be angry when I send you the watch you

gave me last night. Papa agrees with me in thinking such a present too valuable to be accepted from a—an acquaintance. Don't forget to let me know as often as you can by old Hans, how Count Zedwitz is!"

Hamilton dropped her hand with an impatient jerk, and hurried from the house, without speaking another word.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE GARRET.

"STOP, stop if you please," cried Zedwitz's servant to Hamilton, who was beginning to run down the street, "Count Max is not in his own house—he is here just opposite—at the brazier's."

"At the brazier's!" exclaimed Hamilton, "what induced him to go there?"

"Don't know, sir," replied the man, "he has been lodging there the last week or two."

"Lodging there?" repeated Hamilton, as he crossed the street, "that is an odd idea."

The man opened the house-door with a latch-key, took up a candle which was burning on the staircase, and walked up to the very top of the house. They passed through two or three empty garrets before they reached the one which Zedwitz had chosen for his sleeping apartment. The furniture contrasted strangely with the whitewashed walls, sloping ceilings, and windows

protruding from the roof. A handsome bedstead, wardrobe, sofa, several large arm-chairs, and tables covered with writing and drawing materials, found with difficulty, place in the ill-shaped room. A stranger was sitting by the bed ; he rose as Hamilton approached.

"So they have brought you here, after all," said Zedwitz ; "I hope at least that you have been told the true state of the case—that you know that I have the worst description of cholera?"

"You know I do not consider it infectious," replied Hamilton, "and if I can be of any use, I am prepared to remain with you."

Zedwitz pressed his friend's hand.

"If I am not better in a few hours," he said slowly, "that is, when there is no hope of my recovery, you may write to Edelfhof—I do not wish to see any of my family—not even Agnes—coming from the country, they would be too liable to infection."

"But," said Hamilton, "I do not see Doctor Berger—why have you not sent for him?"

"Because I am here, and not in my own house, and he tells everything to his chattering wife, who relates, with interest, all she hears to whoever will listen to her."

"But why *are* you here?" asked Hamilton.

A violent spasm put an end to the conversation, nor was it possible to renew it. Zedwitz hourly became worse. Hamilton proportionably

anxious. At length he sent not only for Doctor Berger, but also for his friend Biedermann, and when they had declared Zedwitz's case almost hopeless, he wrote as he had been desired to Edelhof, and employed his servant Hans as courier.

Late in the evening Zedwitz lay motionless from exhaustion. Biedermann had more than once held a feather under his nostrils to ascertain if he still breathed. Hamilton rose slowly from his station by the bed, and walked cautiously to one of the small windows. On reaching it, he stumbled over a large telescope which was pointed against a round hole, evidently cut in the curtain—he was about to remove the telescope to avoid a recurrence of the noise which he had just made, but, on second thoughts, he seated himself on a chair conveniently placed beside it, and applied his eye to the glass.

In a moment, he was in Madame Rosenberg's drawing-room; the muslin curtains were not closed, and he saw the preparations for the rubber of whist—the candles and counters arranged, the entrance of the Hoffmanns, accompanied as usual by Raimund. The latter soon seated himself at the piano-forte, and from the different movements of his person and hands, Hamilton tried to imagine the music to which the others (not the card-players) listened apparently with the most profound attention. He had heard so much from Hildegarde of her cousin's extraordinary talent for music, that he

expected to see her immediately move towards him. Great was, therefore, his surprise, when she walked to the window most distant from him, and drawing still further aside the small transparent curtains, turned her face upwards, exactly in the direction of the window from which he was looking out. He could not any longer see her features, but he imagined her looking at him, and he involuntarily pushed back his chair. Did she know where he was? Or had she already known that Zedwitz was in her neighbourhood? He tried to remember if she had been in the habit of going to the window—he believed not—but he recollected her immediate recognition of Zedwitz in the street the evening before. The scene on the stairs recurred to his memory with extraordinary exactness, and a sudden suspicion, like a flash of lightning, made him see Zedwitz as his midnight traducer. He strode towards him, but the angry question died on his lips, when he beheld the livid features convulsed with pain. Zedwitz was not only perfectly conscious of his dangerous state, but everything passing around him; he glanced towards the window, and asked in a low hoarse voice, "Have you seen her?"

"Yes, she is looking at the windows of this room."

A long silence ensued, and then Hamilton was called out of the room to speak to old Hans, who had been sent by Hildegarde to make inquiries about Zedwitz.

"How does Mademoiselle Hildegarde know that we are here?" asked Hamilton.

"She inquired of my son this morning when he was packing your clothes. She hopes that you will take care of yourself, and says you must be sure to smell this little silk thing, as it will save you from infection."

Hamilton smiled as he received from the old man a *sachet* containing camphor.

"Perhaps you will give me a line for mademoiselle ; she is very uneasy."

Hamilton wrote a few lines with his pencil.

"She said," remarked old Hans, "you must hang it on your neck, and that she would pray for the wearer every morning in the Frauen church."

"Did she say that?" cried Hamilton, hastily. "At what hour will she be there?"

"Between six and seven o'clock, I should think," answered the man, with a look of intelligence by no means agreeable to Hamilton.

"You need not say that I asked you this question, Hans ; it might prevent her from going to church, you know."

"If you please, I can say you don't think of going to the Frauen church to-morrow morning."

"Say nothing at all, excepting that I am obliged to her and shall wear the amulet," replied Hamilton, abruptly turning away.

The Countess Zedwitz, her daughter, and son-in-law, arrived before daybreak the next

morning. They were at first so agitated that they could not speak a word ; Zedwitz, on the contrary, was perfectly calm. " I expected you, mother," he said, kissing her hand ; " I knew you would come to me, but I wish that dear Agnes and Lengheim had remained at home. You must send them back in the course of the day."

The Countess spoke long and earnestly with Doctor Berger, and then returned to her son's bedside. She told him that his father continued ill and confined to his room ; that he wished to see him again ; was ready to forget all cause of difference between them, and she hoped, as soon as he could be removed, he would return with her to Edelhof.

Zedwitz was too weak to discuss his plans for the future, although immediately after the arrival of his relations he had a change for the better. At five o'clock Dr. Berger gave hopes of his recovery, and an hour afterwards Hamilton was on his way to the Frauen church.

The rain had turned to sleet, and the sleet to snow since he had last been out. Large flakes now fell noiselessly around him ; he saw them not—Hildegarde alone, and alternate hopes and fears that he should not, and hopes that he should, see her, occupied his thoughts.

There were not many people assembled, but the church is large, the altars numerous, and it was some time before he discovered the kneeling figure of her he sought.

Walburg, with her shining braided hair, silver head-dress, and large market-basket on her arm, was standing in the aisle ; *her* prayers seemed ended, for she gazed cheerfully around her, and even nodded occasionally to her basketed acquaintances as they passed. She immediately recognised Hamilton, and stooped down to whisper to Hildegarde, who instantly rose, and Hamilton saw her face suffused with blushes as she walked towards him. They left the church together, and Hildegarde's first words were, "How pale and tired you look ; I hope you are not ill."

"Not in the least," said Hamilton ; and it did not escape his observation that her principal anxiety seemed about himself. "You will be glad to hear that Zedwitz is better at last ; we had no hopes of his recovery until about an hour ago."

"So I have already heard from Mr. Biedermann, who was so kind as to call just before I left home."

"Ah, you have seen Biedermann ?"

"Yes," and then she added after a pause, "now that Count Zedwitz's family have arrived, you ought to think of yourself, for even if you do not fear infection, you must remember that unusual fatigue is dangerous at present. You have been two nights without rest—you who require so much more sleep than anyone else, as I heard you tell mamma more than once."

"That was only an excuse for my unpardonable laziness," replied Hamilton, smiling ; "I in-

tend to go to Havard's to dress and breakfast before I return to Zedwitz. Have you any message for him. I shall deliver it faithfully."

"None, excepting my good wishes," said Hildegarde, turning away. "Walburg, you may now go to the grocer's—I can walk home alone. Good morning, Mr. Hamilton."

Hamilton bowed gravely, waited with due propriety until Walburg was quite out of sight, and then ran after Hildegarde, and endeavoured, while still panting for breath, to thank her for the amulet, and her kind anxiety on his account.

"My father more than shares my anxiety about you," she said, calmly; "he was greatly distressed at hearing that mamma had in a manner banished you from our house. Should you get the cholera now, and not be properly taken care of, how could we write to your family? What could we say to them?"

"You mean in case of my death? By-the-by, I never thought of that. Do not walk so fast—I want to speak to you, and I know you must dismiss me at the next turn. Should I die of cholera——"

"It is time enough to talk of death when you are ill," said Hildegarde, hastily.

"No, it will be too late then. Twenty-four hours are more than enough to finish a man's life now. Will you undertake to write to my sister and arrange my effects?"

"Are you joking?"

"Not in the least. You will find in a rose-wood case a number of papers—a journal in fact. These papers must be carefully sealed and addressed to my sister. There is also a miniature——"

"I know," said Hildegarde.

"How do you know," cried Hamilton, stooping forward to catch a glimpse of her features, "how do you know anything about that?"

"Lina Berger examined your dressing-case one evening when she was in your room. Crescenz was present, and naturally told me of the miniature—I often reminded her of it."

"Indeed! And for what purpose?"

"To prevent her forgetting that you had not even a heart to bestow on her."

"You are right. But to return to the miniature; the original possesses, indeed, a large portion of my affection——" Hamilton stopped; he had flattered himself that his companion would, in some way, betray feelings either of jealousy or curiosity, but she walked on steadily without looking at him; and when he paused, she observed, "You must make haste; we are just at the corner; you need not tell me about the original, but say what you wish me to do with the picture."

"Should we never meet again, unfeeling girl," said Hamilton, half laughing, "you must send the picture to my father, for it is my sister Helen's portrait."

As he spoke, they had reached the place where he knew he must leave her ; she stopped, and said quickly, "Mr. Hamilton, I have in this instance done you great injustice ; I thought your heart was bestowed on the original of the miniature. Without this explanation I should certainly have regarded your conduct towards us as unpardonably—heartless !"

"Not quite," said Hamilton, lightly ; "I really had a heart at my disposal some time ago ; younger sons are allowed to have hearts in England, and to give them away as they please ; few people there think it worth while to accept so worthless a thing as a heart alone. In Germany, the same rational idea seems to prevail——"

"Not so," cried Hildegarde, warmly ; "a heart is always of value—must be of value to everyone, especially to every woman."

"You are making a collection of such valuables, I think," said Hamilton. "Your cousin's has been forced upon you ; Zedwitz's, to say the least, you tacitly accepted ; what you intend to do with mine——"

"I must go home now," said Hildegarde, glancing uneasily down the street ; "it may be remarked if I stand here so long with you——"

"Do not be alarmed," said Hamilton, smiling ; "I have no intention of ever again favouring you with avowals of affection as absurd as useless. You are quite right not to listen to me, but you must have the kindness not to listen to

my midnight representatives either. Such men must not speak for me."

"Do not think about that any more," said Hildegarde. "I dislike the recollection of my stupidity."

"If I only knew who it was," said Hamilton, contracting his brows.

"You possibly suspect Oscar, but when I referred to the subject yesterday evening, he did not in the least understand what I meant, and afterwards denied having seen me from the time I had received my Christmas presents."

"So, then, it was Zedwitz," said Hamilton, musingly. "I am sorry for it ; our friendship is at an end."

"Oh, no," cried Hildegarde ; "perhaps it was not Count Zedwitz ; it is not like him to act so ; besides, he never speaks French with me, and—and his manners are always so respectful. Oh, no, I do not think—I am quite sure it could not have been Count Zedwitz."

"How can you, who are always so rational and candid, talk so ? You know it must have been one or the other ; no one else could have any motive for asking those questions ; I only wish——"

"And I wish," said Hildegarde, interrupting him, "I wish you would not either think or speak again about this disagreeable affair. Oscar has denied knowing anything about it ; therefore you have no pretence to seek a quarrel with him.

You have scarcely a right on suspicion to withdraw your friendship from Count Zedwitz."

"On suspicion! No; but I shall certainly ask him if he was on the stairs of your house on Christmas Eve."

"He will say that he was not."

"If he do, I shall believe him."

"And I also," said Hildegarde, moving onwards.

"You think highly of Zedwitz?"

"Most highly. I have already told you so."

"And of your cousin?"

Hildegarde was silent.

"And yet you continue intimate with him, and tolerate his rhapsodies!"

"He is my cousin—he loves me—and—if you must know all, I fear him now!"

"You! you fear him?"

"Yes; I fear his love and his jealousy—his frightful bursts of passion—his horrible threats. But, look, there is Walburg just now coming home; I must enter the house before her. Adieu."

The Zedwitzes were profuse in their thanks to Hamilton, and used all their eloquence to induce him to return with them to Edelfhof; no argument, however, could prevail on him to quit Munich. Before Zedwitz left, he gave Hamilton the assurance that he had not been in the Rosenbergs' house on Christmas Eve. "If you require proof," he added, "I can give it. You may re-

member I told you that I felt very ill. Could a man in the state I was then in think of such mummeries? besides, when we parted, I went home, that is, to our house in —— Street, changed my clothes, which were wet, and drank some wine. You can inquire of our old housekeeper.”

“It is quite unnecessary,” said Hamilton. “I should rather apologise for having thought you capable of such conduct, even in joke. Hildegard did not for a moment suspect you, although she had heard her cousin’s denial.”

“Excellent girl!—she did me but justice. Much as I should like to know her feelings towards me, I never, even if I had an opportunity, would resort to such means of obtaining information.”

“And what do you think of this denial of Raimund’s?” asked Hamilton.

The carriage rolled to the door. Hamilton assisted his friend down the narrow staircase. “What do you mean to do with yourself until you are allowed to return to the Rosenbergs?” asked the latter as he pressed heavily on his arm.

“I shall buy another horse and a sledge. If the snow last, I rather expect some amusement.”

Arrived in the street, Zedwitz was obliged to lean exhausted against the house. He was with great difficulty lifted into the carriage, and as he sank back in the corner, his languid eyes turned

slowly to the windows of the opposite house. Crescenz and her brothers were looking out, Hildegarde was not visible ; he slightly touched his cap and turned away. His mother and sister were making a final effort to induce Hamilton to remove to Edelhof or Lengheim. Zedwitz saw the uselessness of their endeavours, and calling Hamilton to his side, whispered, "If you should be ill, remember your promise to send for me directly." He then placed his hands on his shoulders, and kissed him on both sides of his face. Completely abashed by this proceeding, Hamilton blushed excessively, and stammered a few incoherent words as the carriage drove off.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE DISCUSSION.

"OH, Hildegarde !" cried Crescenz, pushing back her work-table in order to be able to see better from the window. "Oh, Hildegarde—look, look ! There is Mr. Hamilton driving such a beautiful sledge up our street ; and the horses are prancing and dancing, and shaking their red tassels and silver bells ! Oh, how pretty ! How I wish he would take me out with him !"

"Babette !" cried Mr. Rosenberg, from the

next room, "Mr. Hamilton is just passing our house, and seems in perfect health. How long do you mean his quarantine to last?"

"I have no objection to his returning to-morrow," answered Madame Rosenberg, who was arranging one of the chests of drawers in the drawing-room. "You may tell him so, if you like, this afternoon."

"Not I!" said her husband. "You banished him, and you may recall him, too; if, however, you really wish him to return, you had better make haste, for he seems to be amusing himself very well at Havard's, and is always surrounded by a number of acquaintances. I must confess I miss him more than I expected."

"I wish him to return, of course," said Madame Rosenberg, pushing in the drawers with some violence; "but, for another week or so, I must say I have no objection to his remaining where he is. I can hardly believe that he will escape the cholera—he is so careless! Always going out without a cloak, and being wet through!—wearing thin boots and no flannel waistcoat! Heating his stove and opening his windows! Running out in the middle of the night every time there is an alarm about a house on fire! What can one expect from such doings?"

"As you please, my dear," said Mr. Rosenberg, contentedly. "You know I never had any fancy for lodgers in our house; he is the first I have been able to tolerate. I think, however,

you should not allow him to pay for his apartments here and at Havard's too ! ”

“ Oh, of course not,” said his wife ; “ though I am sure that is the very last thing he would think about—he is excessively careless about money.”

“ So it seems—and I suspect he is spending more than is necessary at present. He gives suppers every night.”

“ I don't believe that ! ”

“ You may believe it—or rather believe me, for I supped with him after the theatre yesterday.”

“ You ? ”

“ Yes. There were also three young Englishmen and that little Lieutenant-major who goes everywhere, playings cards and making himself agreeable.”

“ Lieutenant-major ! How did Hamilton become acquainted with him ? ”

“ Oddly enough ; he met him in the English Gardens one evening before he went to Seon, and either knocked him down or was knocked down by him—I really forgot which ; but a fact it is that Hamilton invited him to supper without remembering his name, and they insisted on my introducing them formally to each other.”

“ Well, to be sure ! ” said Madame Rosenberg. “ If ever I heard of such a thing ! ”

“ He wishes exceedingly to return to us,” continued her husband ; “ he said so when I was

leaving—indeed, he gave me to understand that his guests were merely invited to prevent him from thinking too much of our quiet household ! ”

“ Oh, if that be the case, I consider it a sort of duty to bring him back here and out of the way of temptation,” said Madame Rosenberg, joining her husband, and leaving Hildegarde and Crescenz alone.

They had been interested auditors of this conversation as they sat together working.

“ How I like him for inviting that Lieutenant-major to supper without knowing his name ! Don’t you ? It is so English ! I am very glad he is coming back to us ! ”

“ His return ought to be a matter of indifference to you,” said Hildegarde, without looking up.

“ But I cannot be so indifferent as you are ! ” said Crescenz, petulantly. “ And, though I am going to be married to Major Stultz, Lina Berger says that Mr. Hamilton may still be ‘ *mein schatz* ’ just the same, and no harm ! ”

“ Lina Berger talks great nonsense,” said Hildegarde, with heightened colour. “ This is, however, worse than nonsense.”

“ And yet she could give you some good advice, if you choose to listen to her,” observed Crescenz, nodding her head sagaciously.

“ I do not require any advice from a person I so thoroughly dislike and despise.”

"Oh, that 's just the same with her ; she says she always disliked you, but that she despises you now that you have fallen in love with Theodor Biedermann !"

"What an absurd idea !" said Hildegarde, contemptuously. "Marie de Hoffmann has already told me something of that kind."

"Lina told me long ago that Mr. Biedermann did not think you at all handsome !"

"That I think very probable," said Hildegarde.

"And she says now, he is just the person to teach you not to fall in love without provocation !"

"I think he is more likely to teach me to write German grammatically," answered Hildegarde, with a careless laugh.

"And do you really not care for anybody, and you a whole year older than I am !" exclaimed Crescenz, with unfeigned astonishment. "Lina first thought you liked Mr. Hamilton, until I assured her you hated him. Then she said you had taken a wild kind of fancy to our cousin Oscar. Then she thought you were pretending to like Count Zedwitz on account of his rank and——"

"I am sure I ought to be obliged to you, Crescenz, for discussing my affairs in this manner with my great enemy," said Hildegarde, indignantly.

"Oh, don't be angry. I assure you she talked all herself. I did not say a single word——"

"You forget having confessed that you told her all I confided to you about Count Zedwitz."

"But you never confided in me at all, Hildegard! All I know was what I overheard when you were so angry about the letter, you know!"

"I remember speaking to you about that letter, and telling you to rejoice that you had never any annoyance of the kind."

"But I assure you, Lina had heard everything from the Doctor——"

"Pshaw!" cried Hildegard, pushing back her chair, "there is no use talking to you!"

"I am quite prepared for remarks of this kind," said Crescenz, with a ludicrous imitation of Hildegard's natural dignity of manner; "Lina says there is no bearing you since I have been engaged to be married!"

"So," said Hildegard, throwing down her work; "but I do not quite understand the——"

"Oh, it is easily understood—you are older, and think you ought to have been the first."

"This is really too absurd," cried Hildegard, laughing good-humouredly.

"Oh, laugh as much as you please—but since we have returned from Seon—you have become quite a different person!"

"Did Lina put that into your head also?" asked Hildegard, quickly.

"Oh, no," cried Crescenz, while her eyes filled with tears, "I did not require Lina to point that

out to me. Silly as you think me—I can feel—you are quite changed.”

Hildegarde bit her lip—walked to the window—came hastily back again, and throwing her arms round her sister, kissed her cheek, while she whispered: “Dear girl, I am not in the least changed in my affection for you; but you know yourself that every word I speak to you is repeated to Lina Berger; and how can you expect me to trust you?”

“But,” said Crescenz, looking up, “but you know I often repeated what you said when we were at school, and you only scolded a little sometimes. Now you scarcely ever get into a passion, and are so cold and so careful what you say—just like Mademoiselle Hortense!”

“Like Mademoiselle Hortense?”

“Oh, I don’t mean that you have her thick nose and high shoulders,” said Crescenz, smiling through her tears, “but you scarcely take any notice of me, and are always talking of books with Hamilton!” Hildegarde was silent. “And then you speak English now more than French, and Lina says——”

“Don’t tell me what she says, don’t name her to me again,” cried Hildegarde, impatiently.

“No—no, I won’t,” said Crescenz, alarmed.

“Odious person,” continued Hildegarde, turning away, “I can never forgive her for having embittered the last weeks we shall probably ever spend together.”

"Well," said Crescenz, drying her eyes, "at all events, we shall get on better after my marriage. You know you must have a sort of respect for me then."

Hildegarde turned round to see if her sister were joking; but Crescenz looked perfectly serious.

"Respect is due to married persons," she continued, neatly folding up the work which her sister had thrown on the chair. "Mamma says so—and then, you know, I shall be quite another sort of person, when I am the mother of a family——"

Hildegarde laughed unrestrainedly.

"Madame Lustig says I may have a dozen children! They shall all have pretty names—not one of them shall be called Blazius, that I am determined—they shall be Albert, Maximilian, Ferdinard, Adolph, Philibert."

"Philibert is not a pretty name," said Hildegarde, interrupting her merrily.

"Don't you think so? Well, we can choose another, Conrad for instance?"

"Or Oscar?"

"Oh, no, because I should imagine a sort of resemblance to cousin Oscar, and I don't—quite like him—that is, not very much, though he is my cousin. He is very cross sometimes, indeed almost always to your friend Marie—but, oh! Hildegarde, one very pretty name we have forgotten, and of a very handsome person too—

Alfred ! Mr. Hamilton, you know—is not Alfred a pretty name ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ And he is certainly handsome ? Even you must allow that ? ”

Hildegarde was spared the answer, for Madame Rosenberg entered the room, and having discovered that the tip of Crescenz’s little nose was red, immediately declared it was from want of exercise, and sent both sisters to play at battledore and shuttlecock in the nursery with their brothers.

She then despatched a messenger to Hamilton which caused his immediate return to her house.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE SLEDGE.

HAMILTON’S sledge was the subject of discussion the very first evening of his return—he of course proposed their making use of it, and assured Madame Rosenberg that she might trust herself and her daughters to his care without fear.

“ Oh, dear,—I ’m sure I should not be in the least afraid,” cried Crescenz.

“ And yet you are the greatest coward in the house,” said her mother. “ I am sure you will

scream so often that Mr. Hamilton will refuse to take you a second time."

"Allow me to observe," said Major Stultz, his face increasing in redness as he spoke—"and I conceive I have some right to give an opinion on the subject—that I totally disapprove of Crescenz's going out in Mr. Hamilton's sledge."

"Are you afraid to trust her to my care?" asked Hamilton, laughing.

Major Stultz rapped on the table with his fingers, and looked significantly towards Madame Rosenberg.

"You surely do not think I shall be so awkward as to upset the sledge?" continued Hamilton.

"I have the highest opinion of you, Mr. Hamilton, the highest opinion—where horses are concerned," began Major Stultz, with some embarrassment, while Hamilton rubbed his upper lip to hide a smile. "Had you a carriage instead of a sledge, the case would be different, and I—but I see you understand me."

"Not in the least," said Hamilton, looking up in unfeigned astonishment.

"Crescenz does, however," said Major Stultz, turning to his betrothed, whose face was suffused with blushes.

Madame Rosenberg had been occupied with little Peppy—she was arranging the broken harness of a wooden cart-horse, which had been dragged somewhat roughly round the room. She

now looked up, and observed in a low voice, and with a sort of expressive wink at Major Stultz, "Mr. Hamilton, being an Englishman, knows nothing about sledging rights. Keep your own counsel, and he will never think of claiming it."

"He may claim it from whoever he pleases," cried Major Stultz, bluntly ; "but not from my Crescenz, that's all."

"What is it—what is my right ? What may I claim ?" asked Hamilton, quickly.

No one seemed disposed to explain, until at length Madame Rosenberg replied, laughing, "Neither more nor less than a kiss, which is a sort of old privilege allowed a gentleman if he drive a lady in a sledge ! Now I know that from me you will not claim it, because I am neither young nor pretty—nor from Hildegarde, because you don't like her well enough—nor from Crescenz, because she is betrothed. So really, Major, I see no reason for making such a serious face."

"I intend to drive Crescenz myself in a sledge," said Major Stultz ; "I take it for granted she will enjoy it as much with me as with Mr. Hamilton."

Crescenz bent her head over her work, and said not a word.

A heavy fall of snow during the night, and a clear blue sky the next day, proved most propitious ; and after dinner the sledge was brought to the door. Madame Rosenberg and her son Gustle were carefully assisted by Hamilton into

the light fantastic vehicle, while Hans, not unnecessarily, held the horses' heads. No sooner were the spirited animals released than they bounded forward with a vehemence which caused Madame Rosenberg to utter an only half-suppressed scream, while the child, participating in his mother's alarm, seized Hamilton's arm, and clung to it with all his strength. One of the horses reared dangerously. "Gustle, you must not touch my arm or the reins!" cried Hamilton, shaking him off. "They will be quiet in a moment," he added to Madame Rosenberg, who had closed her eyes and compressed her lips as if prepared for the worst; but notwithstanding all his endeavours, the horses pranced and danced and bounded, to the great admiration of the passers-by, while poor Madame Rosenberg sat in a sort of agony. She did not speak a word until they had reached the Nymphenburg road, but there every sledge they met increased her terrors, and at length she spoke—"Oh, dear, good, excellent Mr. Hamilton—turn back and take me home again—I know you are too good-natured to enjoy my anxiety—if it were only for Gustle's sake, see——Oh!——Ah! The child is frightened to death almost, and no wonder! I declare if I had not come out in my slippers I would walk home—oh, pray stop—turn—before we meet that sledge coming towards us. When your horses hear the bells of the other sledges, they get quite wild! Dear, kind Mr. Hamilton,

I shall love you all my life if you will only take us home again."

Gustle, shocked by his mother's unwonted humility of manner, and imagining himself in the most imminent danger, commenced roaring with all his might, and Hamilton turned his horses, while assuring Madame Rosenberg they were the gentlest animals in the world, and it was only the fine weather that had put them in spirits.

On their return they found a respectable-looking hackney coach placed on a sledge waiting at the door. Crescenz, her little brother Peppy, and Major Stultz were preparing to enter it.

"I will go with you," cried Madame Rosenberg, joining them, "Gustle must not lose his drive—Mr. Hamilton's horses are much too wild for me!"

"I thought as much," said Major Stultz, with evident satisfaction.

"Am I permitted to ask Mademoiselle Hildegarde to go with me?" asked Hamilton.

"Yes, but you must tell her how your horses have frightened me, and you must promise to drive on the Nymphenburg road where we can see you, and you must not go farther than the palace, and back again."

"Agreed," said Hamilton.

"And you must on no account quit the sledge, or enter the inn."

"Of course not."

Hildegarde was surprised to see him so soon

again. He explained, and asked her if she were afraid to trust herself to his care.

"No, I believe you drive well."

"Rather—but I have never had a sledge until now—and they seem slippery concerns."

"I have heard that being thrown out of one is more uncomfortable than dangerous," said Hildegarde, laughing as she entered her room to dress herself.

The horses pawed the half-frozen snow, and were even more impatient than before—but this time no hand was laid on his arm, no stifled scream vexed his ear. Hildegarde admired the silver serpents which ornamented the front of the sledge—the silver bells which glittered on the harness, and the gay scarlet tassels which the horses flung in the air with every movement—the blue sky—the dazzling snow ; and Hamilton, perfectly reassured, was soon able to prove to his horses that he no longer feared to correct them.

In a few minutes they had overtaken and passed the hackney sledge, containing the rest of the party, nor was it long before they reached Nymphenburg.

"What shall we do now?" said Hamilton. "I promised your mother not to go farther than the palace ; I am sure the others are not yet half-way here ; must we go home so soon?"

"Drive round and round this enclosure until they come, it will amuse us and exercise the horses," replied Hildegarde.

They drove round several times, each time quicker than the preceding, while Hans, with extraordinary energy, cracked the pliant leather whip peculiar to sledges. Several people collected to look on, among others a carter, with an empty wagon. One of his horses was young and unbroken ; as the sledge passed, it plunged, and rattled its heavy harness ; Hamilton's horses shied, dashed into the deep snow heaped up beside the road, upset the sledge, and then struggled violently to make themselves free. Hamilton still contrived to hold the reins until his servant came to his assistance, and then rushed to Hildegarde, who had been thrown to some distance. A crowd had soon gathered round her.

"Hildegarde, dearest, are you hurt?" he asked, anxiously.

"Not in the least," she answered, laughing, while she shook the snow from her cloak, "not in the least ; I was thrown at the first jerk into the fresh snow, and every time I attempted to get up I fell back again, until I received assistance, for which I thank you," she said, turning to some strangers ; and then she added hurriedly to Hamilton, "Let us go home."

The sledge had been easily set to rights, and they once more drove off at a furious pace.

"As wild a young pair as ever I saw," observed an officer to his wife, as they turned towards the inn to rest, and refresh themselves with a cup of coffee.

"We have disobeyed your mother," began Hamilton, "unintentionally indeed, but——"

"How do you mean?"

"Why, she forbade our leaving the sledge on any account whatever," said Hamilton, laughing; "now, I don't in the least mind being lectured by her, but I confess I do not enjoy the idea of Major Stultz's triumph. How unmercifully I shall be laughed at!"

"I don't see any necessity for saying anything about the matter," said Hildegard; "if you choose to be silent, I shall never refer to the subject; in fact, I was altogether to blame, it was my proposition driving round that enclosure, and it was I who encouraged you to worry the horses, in order to show you that I was not afraid of them."

"The carter and his young horse were to blame," said Hamilton; "he ought not to have come so close to us; but I should be very glad to escape Major Stultz's heavy raillery. Do you hear, Hans—you fell out of the sledge in your sleep—not even to your father must you say otherwise than that my horses are as steady as oxen. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

Perhaps the fear of being questioned induced Hamilton when returning to pass the others so quickly that he did not hear their cries to him to stop and return to Nymphenburg. Perhaps the wish to be once more alone with his com-

panion for half an hour made him urge his horses to their hardest trot: if the latter had been his object, his annoyance may be conceived when, on reaching home, just as they had begun to ascend the stairs together, gayly laughing, he perceived Count Raimund standing above them. He had seen their arrival from the Hoffmanns' window, and rushed out under pretence of a joke, but, in reality, to waylay them. Hamilton could not conceal his vexation; he frowned, and muttered the words "Everlasting bore!" which made Hildegarde's countenance change in a manner that irritated her cousin. "Hildegarde, I must speak to you," he began abruptly.

"Speak on," she said, continuing to ascend the stairs.

"I must ask you a question—and—we must be alone."

"You are peremptory—ask differently, and per—haps I may comply with your request."

Count Raimund grasped—not gently—his cousin's arm—she turned round—became very pale—and requested Hamilton, in a low voice, to go up stairs—she would follow him directly.

"Do you really wish me to go?" he asked, hesitatingly. "Do you remain willingly with your cousin? Remember," he added indignantly, "the nearest relationship cannot authorise such——"

Count Raimund made a violent gesture—Hildegarde placed herself between them, and

said hurriedly, "I—I do wish to speak to Oscar," and Hamilton instantly left them.

Directly he was gone her manner totally changed. "Your question, Oscar, and quickly," she said, haughtily, "I have no intention of remaining on the cold staircase more than a few minutes."

"Gently, gently, Hildegarde—you think the danger is over now your treasure is out of sight—but you see how ready he is to quarrel, with all his coolness—be careful, for——"

"Your question," said Hildegarde, leaning against the wall, with a sigh of resignation.

"Did this a—this Englishman condescend to claim his sledging right from you?"

"No."

"Did he not think it worth while?" said Raimund, sneeringly.

"Very probably. Have you anything else to observe?"

"Yes, false girl!" cried Raimund, vehemently, "you know this is not the case—you know this is not the case—you know he loves you—his every look betrays him; but, by heaven, if you grant him what I, your nearest relative, have so long implored in vain—his life shall be the forfeit——"

"Always threatening!" exclaimed Hildegarde, indignantly.

"It is my only means to obtain a moment's attention from you. He little knows that to his

influence alone I am indebted for every favour—for every common civility I receive from you !”

“He little knows that, indeed !” said Hildegarde, bitterly, “were he aware of it, he would soon release me from my thralldom.”

“Tell him—tell him. I desire nothing more than that matters should come to extremities. You look incredulous, Hildegarde. Hear me, and judge for yourself. Pecuniary difficulties have often made men put an end to their existence—and you know what mine are ! Add to this a violent and hopeless love, and the certainty of being obliged, in a week or ten days, to marry a person for whom I never can feel a particle of either affection or admiration !”

“But who is worthy of both !” cried Hildegarde.

“Perhaps so—I wish Marie every happiness with another—for myself,” he added, folding his arms and looking musingly down the stairs ; “I wish to die, to die soon—and quickly—but not by my own hand. They say it is a fearful crime to commit suicide. Were I certain of being shot by Hamilton, I should not hesitate—he must then leave Bavaria and you for ever—but the chances are I should shoot him—I hate him so intensely that the temptation would be more than I could resist.”

“Horrible !” cried Hildegarde, covering her face with her hands. “How can you deliberately think of committing murder ?”

"That 's it—that 's what I mean ; you see, Hildegarde, death is my only resource ; but I shudder at the thought of staining my hands with other blood than my own. The double crime is more than I can resolve upon."

"Ah, I see now," said she, forcing a smile ; "you are only trying to frighten me, as you have often done before."

He shook his head, and continued. "As long as I had the faintest hope of obtaining your affection, I was a different being ; you might have made of me what you pleased—and I *should* have gained your love but for this supercilious Englishman, for you were disposed to like me at first."

"As a relation—yes."

"More than that—much more, Hildegarde," cried Raimund, vehemently.

"And had I loved you more than as a cousin, what purpose would it have served ? Our relationship is too near to permit of a marriage."

"Nothing easier than obtaining a dispensation," cried Raimund, eagerly, and in a moment losing all violence of manner and voice.

"But we are both without fortune," said Hildegarde.

"I could quit the army. There are many situations which I could obtain. We should be poor, indeed, very poor ; but what is poverty when—— Oh ! Hildegarde, has this consideration caused your coldness, or are you—— What

a fool I am ! ” he exclaimed, passionately. “ She treats me like a madman from whom she would escape without witnessing a paroxysm ! Go, you have tortured me—deliberately—most horribly. Go, I would hate you if I could ! ”

Hildegarde began slowly to ascend the stairs ; as she turned to the next flight an unusual sound made her look downwards, and she perceived her cousin vainly endeavouring to suppress the fearful emotion which agitated his whole frame. A man’s tears are a phenomenon too rare to be seen unmoved. Hildegarde stopped, and held out her hand. “ Oscar, dear Oscar, what I said was not in heartlessness, but in the hope of convincing you of the utter impossibility of our ever being more to each other than cousins. Think of your solemn engagement to Marie—of your promises to your father. Remember that no situation you could ever obtain would enable you to pay your debts ! ”

“ True—most true. I was dreaming just now,” said Raimund, with forced composure. “ I am sorry to have kept you so long here—in the cold. Go, Mr. Hamilton is waiting for you ! ”

“ He is not. I shall most probably not see him until evening.”

Raimund looked up, smiled mournfully, and then rushed down the stairs.

A minute later Hildegarde was in her room ; her cloak and boa almost suffocated her, and she shook them off impatiently, sank on a

chair, and murmured : "What shall I do? What ought I to do? Oscar will quarrel with him—kill him, and I shall be the cause. He must leave Munich—leave us, and return to England." Here she sprang from her chair, and walked up and down the room for a few minutes. "Is there, then, no other way of keeping him out of danger? Suppose he could be induced to go to the Z——'s? He said he intended to visit them. If he only could go until after Oscar's marriage? A fortnight—only two weeks, and all danger would be over! I must speak to him, even if he insists on knowing everything. I wonder if he is in the drawing-room?"

He was not, nor in the school-room, and she had not the courage to seek him in his apartment. She hoped to find an opportunity in the course of the next day, although with female quickness she had already observed that he no longer sought to be alone with her, or in any way to occupy her attention. Hamilton's motives were honourable, but he could scarcely have chosen a more judicious mode of conduct in order to facilitate their intercourse; it had already convinced Mr. Rosenberg of his indifference to his daughter just when he had begun to entertain suspicions to the contrary, and confirmed Madame Rosenberg in the idea that Hamilton actually disliked her.

After wandering about the house for some time, Hildegard returned to her room, and en-

deavoured to arrange her thoughts, and her balls of coloured worsted and silks, until the return of her family. They came late, and talked loudly and gayly on their arrival. When Crescenz entered the room, she immediately exclaimed, "Oh ! Hildegarde, we have had such a pleasant party—such a number of people, and such good coffee ! and the Bergers. Oh dear, I was so sorry that you and——but I had almost forgotten, mamma says you must make tea directly for Mr. Hamilton, he is going to the theatre, there is an opera, and he wishes to hear the overture."

Hildegarde pushed back her work-frame, and left the room to seek the breakfast service of highly gilt china, which Madame Rosenberg had received as a wedding present, and which, though certainly intended by the donor to have been "kept for show," she had latterly appropriated to Hamilton's use, whenever he drank tea alone, and this was generally the case the evenings he went to the theatre. When she carried it to the drawing-room, she found her father, mother, and Major Stultz with him, and as she poured out the weak beverage, and arranged the plate of bread and butter, her mother continued speaking—"We thought you did not choose to hear us—but then what motive could you have ?"

"What ! indeed !" said Hamilton.

"The Major shouted the words Nymphenburg and coffee as loud as he could ; he thought they might give you an idea what we meant."

"We heard nothing. The confounded bells made such a noise."

"The bells are very useful when it grows foggy, or dark, as we found this evening," observed Major Stultz.

"Hildegarde, you may light the candles—Mr. Hamilton cannot find the way to his mouth."

Hildegarde brought them, while Crescenz, who had joined the others, continued repeating : "So pleasant, so gay ! So many people ! And then about the upset—did you relate about that ?"

"No," cried Hamilton, looking up ; "pray tell me about it. You don't mean to say you were upset ?"

"Oh, no ! But a young Englishman and his wife were thrown out of their sledge to-day when they were driving around the palings at Nymphenburg. Captain What-'s-his-name told us all about it, and they were so young and so handsome, he said."

"Your countrymen can drive mail-coaches better than sledges," said Major Stultz, laughing.

"It is not proved that they were English," said Hamilton, with a smile only perceptible to Hildegarde. "They may have been Germans."

"Zimmermann said they were certainly English, and he understands the language. The lady thanked him in French for extricating her out of the snow ; he says she was quite English-looking, and uncommonly handsome !"

"I have no doubt of his judgment on that subject," said Hamilton.

"And," said Crescenz, "her husband seemed so fond of her, and said all sorts of things to her when he assisted her into the sledge again!"

"All sorts of things!" cried Hamilton, laughing; "such as, for instance——"

"Oh, I cannot say the English words—I have never heard you say anything that sounded like them."

"Of course not—I must wait until I have a wife, I suppose."

Hildegarde's face had flushed during this conversation. Hamilton seemed so much amused with it, that he forgot the overture he had been so anxious to hear. "Your friend did not know at all who they were?" he asked, bending over his tea-cup.

"Not in the least," answered Major Stultz; "but the lady made a great impression on Zimmermann, he seemed altogether to have fallen in love with her!"

"Oh, ho!" exclaimed Mr. Rosenberg, "what did his wife say to that?"

"She said she had no cause for jealousy, the Englishwoman did not look at anyone—she only seemed anxious to assure her husband that she was not in the least hurt, though she must have been considerably bruised, and she appeared to wish everyone else at the bottom of the sea!"

A good example for you, Crescenz, next month, eh?"

Crescenz looked silly, and turned away.

"Half-past six!" cried Mr. Rosenberg, looking at his watch; "I must be off. Mr. Hamilton seems to forget that he intended to go with me to the theatre. The overture will be over."

"But not the ballet," said Hamilton, "and the ballet in *Robert* is what I like best; if I be in time for that and the Princess's *aria*, I am satisfied."

Mr. Rosenberg, who went regularly four times a week to the theatre, and particularly disliked arriving late, partly from the fear of being obliged to walk over his neighbours' feet in order to reach his chair, partly from long habits of punctuality, after a few minutes' indulgence of civilly expressive impatience, quitted the room, bowing over his watch, which he still held in his hand, as a sort of excuse to Hamilton.

"I thought you intended to go too?" said Crescenz to Major Stultz.

"Yes, Zimmermann has given me his place to-night, but I believe I shall wait for Mr. Hamilton."

"I shall be delighted," said Hamilton, "but you must not expect me to leave this warm room for an hour at least."

"An hour!" exclaimed Major Stultz; "why, half the opera will be over."

"Very likely, but I have heard it so often."

"Do you forget the ballet?"

"Very likely I shall," said Hamilton.

"I knew," cried Crescenz, "I knew he did not really care for the ballet."

"Excuse me, but I do care for the ballet, and I should care more for it if the dancers were prettier, and had not such thick ankles!"

"Smooth waters run deep," said Major Stultz. "It is a pity, Crescenz, your mother did not hear that speech, she would hardly have believed her own ears!"

"Why not?" said Hamilton. "Do you mean to say that you do not, or did not formerly, like seeing a ballet and pretty women too?"

"We will not discuss this subject in the presence of the young ladies," said Major Stultz.

"There is nothing to discuss," said Hamilton, carelessly; "I like seeing pretty faces, and pretty ankles, and graceful figures, and I believe I am not singular in my taste; perhaps, however, you prefer the flowing hair which will be exhibited to-night. By-the-by, one girl has the very longest and thickest hair I ever saw. Have you not observed it?"

"Yes; Crescenz's, however, is nearly as long, I should think," replied Major Stultz, touching the thick plats which were wound round the back of her head.

"She would make a charming ballet-dancer in every respect," murmured Hamilton in French, while he laughingly glanced at her.

"What does he say?" asked Major Stultz, who observed that Crescenz blushed and smiled alternately. "What does he say?"

"To think of his caring so much for a ballet!" answered Crescenz, evasively, while she still blushed, and then laughed as she added, "and you know all mamma said about his being religious, and not going out in the evenings, or on Sunday to the theatre."

"I suspect your mother has a better opinion of him than he deserves," whispered Major Stultz. Crescenz, however, shook her head so incredulously, or so coquettishly, that he added, "Do not think me jealous; it is impossible, now that I know who is the real object of his devotion."

"Ah, you mean Hildegarde," said Crescenz, carelessly.

"Oh, no."

"Who then?" asked Crescenz, turning towards him quickly, curiosity depicted in every feature, "who?"

"I can scarcely tell you—as he has chosen a married woman——"

Crescenz looked aghast. Major Stultz's jealousy conquered his usual circumspection—the moment was too favourable for making an impression—he bent towards her and whispered, "No other than your friend, Madame Berger."

"Impossible!"

"Certain, nevertheless. When your mother forbade his returning here, he was invited to

spend his disengaged evenings at her house. He knows the Doctor well ; besides, Berger is Zedwitz's physician, and they have often met lately. Had the thing been feasible, Hamilton would, I have no doubt, have taken up his quarters in their house ! ”

Crescenz for once in her life seemed to think, and think deeply. All Major Stultz's efforts to continue the conversation were fruitless ; she bent her head over her work, and scarcely heard his excuses and regrets that he was going to the theatre without her. After he had left the room, there was a long pause. Hildegarde had been leaning her head on her hand for the last half hour, apparently unconscious of what was going on about her. Crescenz moved softly towards her, and on pretence of consulting her about her work, contrived to relate what she had just heard.

Hildegarde became so suddenly and remarkably pale, that Hamilton, who was in the habit of watching her, immediately perceived it, and exclaimed, “What is the matter ? Are you ill ? ”

“Not in the least,” she answered, hastily rising and walking to the other end of the room.

“But is it not odious ? ” cried Crescenz, indignantly ; “she is the very last person I should have thought of ! ”

“And the very first I should have suspected,” said Hildegarde.

The house-bell rang, and a slight noise in the passage was followed by the entrance of the person who had been the subject of conversation. "How very odd!" exclaimed Crescenz, while Madame Berger, advancing towards Hamilton, held out her hand, saying, "*A l'Anglaise* ; how I like your English custom of shaking hands—it is so friendly ! *Bon soir*, Hildegarde. Give me a kiss, Cressy. Here I am, come all in the snow on foot to talk over our first ball, eh ? and to arrange the party of which we spoke," she added, turning to Hamilton.

"How provoking—and I am just preparing to go to the theatre !"

"You most uncivil person ! Can you not bestow half an hour on me ?"

"An hour—two hours, if you in the slightest degree wish it. My regrets were for myself."

Hildegarde and Crescenz looked at each other.

"I have not," he continued gayly, "forgotten the pleasant evenings which I spent in your house during my banishment—they will ever remain among my most agreeable recollections."

"Perhaps I may give them a place among mine too," said Madame Berger, seating herself on the sofa, and taking her knitting apparatus out of her pocket. Her fingers were soon in such quick motion, that it was impossible to follow them, but so expert was she in this kind of work, that her head turned in every direction, and her eyes wandered round the room as if she had been

totally unoccupied. "Why, girls, what is the matter with you both this evening? I never saw you so dull. We can fancy ourselves *tête-à-tête*," she said, laughingly, to Hamilton, "if you would only cease playing with your teaspoon and sit down beside me here."

Hamilton immediately took the offered place, and Madame Berger, half playfully, half maliciously, turned quite away from the sisters. "Well," she continued, glancing covertly towards them; "to-morrow is our first ball; of course you have heard of our muslin dresses and wreaths of roses?"

"No," said Hamilton, "I only returned here yesterday evening, and have heard nothing about it. Where is the ball?"

"At the Museum. You are a member of the club, I believe—it is there you read the foreign newspapers, you know. I shall keep a waltz or galop for you."

"To-morrow, did you say? and I am invited to a private ball at Court! If it were only the day after!"

"This all comes from cholera!" cried Madame Berger, in a tone of vexation. "Everything heaped together at the end of the carnival! There is to be a masquerade at the theatre on Monday; you said you wished to go to one; let us at least arrange something about that."

"Can you not promise to be of the party?" said Hamilton, turning to Hildegarde.

"It will altogether depend upon papa," she answered coldly, and then left the room without looking towards the speakers.

"Come here, Crescenz," said Madame Berger, "come here, and I will tell you how we can manage it : your mother intends to go some day or other to see her father. Why not on Monday, if Mr. Hamilton offers his sledge ? "

"Oh, she is so afraid of his horses, that nothing would tempt her to take them."

"Well, then, the Doctor must lend his old greys, for on Monday both she and your father must be out of the way. Don't be so stupid as to say this to Hildegarde, however ! "

"Oh, mamma will never trust us with you alone," said Crescenz.

"I suspected as much, and have engaged old Lustig to go with us ; she will do whatever we please, and I have promised to arrange a ' bat ' for her like my own ; we will all go as bats. Shall we be black or white ? "

"Which is the most becoming?" asked Crescenz.

"Becoming ! why, child, I do believe you don't know what I mean. A bat as mask means a domino so arranged that one cannot see even the form of the head, the smallest lock of hair, or even quite know whether the person be a man or woman."

"I thought we should have had something pretty," said Crescenz, disappointed, "such as Grecian costumes."

"You may dress yourself as a Greek or a Turk, if you like, but you may be recognised and tormented. For my part, I go to worry others, and have decided on a black domino—a complete capuchin ; Mr. Hamilton and Madame Lustig the same ; you and Hildegarde may of course arrange as you please."

"Oh dear ! I am afraid Hildegarde will not go without asking papa's leave."

"Don't say a word more about the matter to her ; she will think we have forgotten it, and—when papa and mamma are gone, I will come and arrange everything."

"Oh dear, how nice !" cried Crescenz, seating herself confidentially beside her friend, but a moment after she sprang up, assumed a dignified air, and walked towards the door.

"You don't mean to leave us, Cressy ?" exclaimed Madame Berger, surprised.

"I am going to tell mamma that you are here," she replied, stiffly.

"Oh, my dear creature, she has heard from Walburg long ago. She is engaged with the children, or counting linen, or something of that sort. Stay here like a love, and play propriety."

"But I don't choose to play propriety," said Crescenz, angrily, as she left the room.

Madame Berger looked amazed for a moment, and then burst into a fit of laughter. "I do believe the child is jealous !" she exclaimed.

"How ridiculous! how amusing! I wish it were Hildegard—I would give—what would I *not* give to make *her* jealous for half an hour! It would be sublime! Theodor could assist me if he chose."

"You think she likes him?" said Hamilton.

"He says not, but I can discover no other person. Can you believe that she cares for no one?"

"She cares a great deal for her father," answered Hamilton.

"Ah, bah—a person of her violent temperament must have a *grande* passion before this time."

"I have not lately seen anything like violence," said Hamilton.

"A certain proof that she is desirous of pleasing some one."

"I should have no objection to be the person *she* is desirous of pleasing," said Hamilton; "she is perfectly amiable with her father; should she bestow one of the looks intended for him upon me, I confess I should be——"

"And has she really never tried to make you say civil things to her?" asked Madame Berger, quickly.

"On the contrary, she has provoked me to say very *uncivil* things sometimes."

"And so you have been obliged to amuse yourself with poor simple Crescenz?"

"Who," said Hamilton. "is the most innocent being in the world—a pretty child——"

"A pretty fool!" cried Madame Berger, "but let us talk of our masquerade—you will go at all events?"

"Certainly."

"And dressed in black—and masked?"

"Agreed."

"You have no idea how amusing it is! One can say all sorts of impertinent things—even to the royal family when they are present. Masks are allowed perfect impunity."

"But should you be discovered afterwards?"

"I shall deny knowing anything about the matter, of course."

Hamilton had not time to reply by word or look, for at this moment supper was announced.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A BALL AT THE MUSEUM CLUB.

"I HOPE we shall have no visitors," said Crescenz the next day, after having examined herself for some time attentively in the glass which was between the windows in the drawing-room. "I hope we shall have no visitors, for these curl-papers are certainly not becoming. If mamma had allowed, I should have passed the day in my own room, that nobody might see them. Don't you think me very ugly to-day?" she added, turning to Hamilton, who, as usual, was close to the stove.

"You are not ugly, but the curl-papers are," he answered, looking at her over his book.

"But we shall look so well with long curls in the evening," she said, half appealing to her sister, who was standing at the window with some intricate piece of work. "What a pity one cannot have curls without curl-papers."

"They are dearly bought if you are obliged to wear your hair twisted up in that manner all day," said Hamilton.

"I thought Englishwomen very often had long curls."

"So they have—but they never appear in a drawing-room with curl-papers."

"They certainly are very unbecoming," said Crescenz, again inspecting herself in the glass. "I have a great mind to arrange my braids again. After all, my hair will perhaps fall out of curl during the first waltz. You know, Hildegarde, at the examinations I was obliged to fasten up the curls with a comb?"

"Yes, but I remember the curls became you extremely——"

"Hildegarde," whispered Crescenz, coming close to her sister, "you know Mr. Hamilton cannot go to the ball, and if he thinks the curl-papers so very ugly——"

"I should think Major Stultz's opinion of more consequence to you," answered Hildegarde; "and," she added loud enough to be heard, "you know if Mr. Hamilton dislike so

much seeing curl-papers, he has only to avoid looking at us for the remainder of the day."

Hamilton closed his book, looked out of the window at the thickly-falling snow, and then left the room. Crescenz immediately exclaimed, "Oh, Hildegarde, you have offended him! How can you be so unkind?"

"Is it unkind to tell him not to look at us for a few hours?" Hildegarde asked, laughing.

"You are so unnecessarily rude to him sometimes—yesterday evening, for instance, you scarcely answered him when he spoke to you."

"Because I was occupied with my father. I hope you have no objection to my preferring his conversation to Mr. Hamilton's!"

"But you were only talking about the opera to papa, who would have been very glad if you had allowed him to hear what Mr. Hamilton was telling Lina Berger about a picnic party on the Thames. Lina says he is the most fascinating young man she ever met, not even excepting Theodor Biedermann!"

"And Mr. Hamilton will tell you, if you ask him, that Madame Berger is the most fascinating young woman he ever met with, not even excepting Crescenz Rosenberg."

"Oh, dear; I forgot to tell you that Major Stultz was quite mistaken. Lina explained everything before she left yesterday evening. Mr. Hamilton only went to hear her play waltzes!"

Hildegarde shook her head incredulously.

"You do not believe her?"

"No."

"Well, I do; and I will manage to find out from Mr. Hamilton the whole truth."

"Don't attempt anything of the kind, Crescenz; you will only make yourself ridiculous."

"We shall see," said Crescenz, nodding her head as she left the room.

When she returned to the drawing-room her hair was braided in the usual manner; and she rather unwillingly confessed that she had seen Hamilton, who had said that he "thought braids infinitely more becoming than curls for young and pretty persons!"

"I greatly fear Mr. Hamilton is beginning to amuse himself again at your expense," observed Hildegarde, with some irritation.

"He did not seem to be amusing himself; he spoke quite gravely, and papa, who was present, agreed with him."

Hildegarde's hand rose to her head, and her fingers impatiently contracted themselves round the offending curl-papers. "If I had known that papa thought so, I should never have curled my hair, but now it is too late; Mr. Hamilton will think I have tried to please him, and——"

"Oh, dear, no," cried Crescenz; "he did not seem in the least to think I had braided my hair to please him. He was talking to papa about religion and philosophy, and some acquaintances of the name of Hegel and Schelling."

Hildegarde smiled. "If they were talking of Hegel and Schelling, I dare say he has forgotten us and our curls. I could not possibly think of sacrificing my ringlets to please *him*, and papa I shall probably not see until evening."

Hamilton took her advice more literally than she just then wished : he remained in his room the rest of the day, and thus avoided seeing her again. She felt that a few words spoken in a moment of irritation had deprived her of all chance of seeing him alone for a few minutes, in order to induce him to avoid her cousin, and go the ensuing week to the Z——'s ; but she consoled herself by thinking that at least they were not likely to meet during that evening, as Raimund had not been invited to the ball at Court, and was to accompany his betrothed to the Museum.

As soon as it was dusk, the sisters disappeared. Madame Rosenberg in vain sent to request they would come to supper. They were not hungry. They could not eat. "Quite natural !" observed their father, helping himself to some *salmi* and cold turkey. "Quite natural ! Who ever heard of a girl eating before she went to her first ball ? I suppose, however, they will soon be dressed ; so I think, Babette, you might now put on your own brown silk dress and pink turban ; it would be a pity if they were to lose a dance ! Mr. Hamilton has offered to leave us at the Museum, on his way to the palace."

Madame Rosenberg poured out a glass of beer,

drank it quickly, and left the room. A few minutes afterwards, Hildegarde and her sister entered, in all the charms of youth and white muslin. "Is she not beautiful?" exclaimed Crescenz, for a moment forgetting herself in her admiration of her sister. "Is she not beautiful? Ah, I knew you would admire curls," she added as a sort of reply to Hamilton's look of most genuine admiration. "Curls are prettier than braids after all!" She drew her hand, as she spoke, over her smooth shining hair, and glanced regretfully towards the looking-glass.

Hildegarde turned from Hamilton with a slightly conscious blush. Never had he seen or imagined anyone so lovely as she appeared to him at that moment. The long waving ringlets of her rich brown hair relieved the slightly severe expression of her almost too regular features, while her beautifully-formed figure, seen to advantage in her light ball-dress, attracted equally by its roundness and delicacy. Had Hamilton seen her for the first time that evening, he would have been captivated. When we, however, remember that she had been for months the object of his first love, that he had resided in the same house, and had had opportunities of knowing and judging her by no means commonplace ideas, as they had studied together, and that he was at a time of life when the feelings are most impetuous, we may form some idea of the emotion which, for some minutes, deprived him of the power of

utterance. Hildegarde was so perfectly independent in thought and action ; she required so little of that protection which her sex usually seek, that had she not been eminently handsome, she would probably have found more people disposed to admire her character than love her person. Men especially do not often bestow affection on such women ; but, when they do, it is with a degree of passion which they seldom or never feel for the more gentle or weaker of the sex. And so—irresistibly attracted by her beauty, and perhaps hoping to find feelings as strong as her mind, three men now loved her with characteristic fervour ; her cousin, with an intensity bordering on insanity ; Zedwitz with the glowing steadiness of his disposition and years, and Hamilton with all the ardour of extreme youth.

“ I thought Hildegarde would have worn one of my bracelets this evening,” said Crescenz. “ I offered her the choice of them all ! ”

“ That was very kind of you, Crescenz,” said her father, “ but Hildegarde does not care for ornaments of that kind.”

“ But look at that ugly little hair-bracelet which she insists upon wearing,” said Crescenz, laughing. “ If she had bracelets of her own, she would wear them, I am sure. Everyone must like bracelets ! ”

Mr. Rosenberg took Hildegarde's hand, and raised her passive arm towards his eyes, in order

to inspect the bracelet. "It is not ugly, nor ill chosen either," he observed, smiling; "a black bracelet makes an arm look fairer still; but I own I did not think my treasure studied such things!"

Hildegarde, with a look of annoyance, hastily unclasped the bracelet, and threw it into her work-basket.

"Don't be offended, Hildegarde. Every woman should endeavour to improve her appearance as much as possible. Your arm is round and white, and the bracelet pretty; it ought, perhaps, to have been a little broader, but the horse-hair was scarce, it seems! However, you can wear it very creditably; at a little distance, people will think it the hair of some very dear friend!"

Madame Rosenberg made her appearance at this moment, in a state of ludicrous distress; she had tried to force her large hands into a pair of small French gloves. One, from its elasticity, had been drawn somewhat over the half of one hand, leaving the other half and the wrist quite bare; but the other had burst asunder across the palm, and she now held it towards her husband, with a look of mock despair.

"Try another and a larger pair," he said, laughing.

"I have not another pair in the house. You know I never want white gloves, and I was obliged to send to Schultz for these, after I had begun to dress!"

“Oh, I can mend it in a moment,” cried Crescenz, bringing a needle and thread. “Only keep it on your hand—it will never do if you pull it off again.”

Hamilton had in the meantime been playing with the discarded bracelet ; Hildegarde attempted to take it out of his hand, but he held it nearer the light, observing in a low voice, “This is not *horse* hair. It cannot be your father’s or your sister’s, for they have brown hair ; nor your cousin’s ; nor——”

“Give me my bracelet,” said Hildegarde, impatiently. He held it towards her with both hands, and a look of pretended alarm. She half smiled, and extended her arm, while with a degree of trepidation which he in vain endeavoured to overcome, he placed the tongue in the serpent’s head which formed the clasp. When he looked up her head was averted, and she was jesting with her father about her chance of finding partners or being left sitting.

“Pray, keep one waltz or galop in reserve for me,” cried Hamilton. “I shall be at the Museum between ten and eleven o’clock.”

Hildegarde murmured a sort of assent, but the expression of her countenance denoted anything but satisfaction. She became grave and thoughtful. It was impossible not to perceive the change, and with ill-concealed mortification Hamilton turned to her father : “Your daughter does not know, perhaps, that I have learned to

waltz since I came here. I am no longer a bad dancer."

"Oh, dear! I always thought you danced extremely well," said Crescenz.

"I may depend upon your keeping a waltz free for me; if Major Stultz will permit it."

"Oh, yes; that is," said Crescenz, correcting herself, "if you can remember your engagement with me when Lina Berger is present."

"Madame Berger has no influence whatever upon my memory."

"No, but upon your heart."

"None whatever. She is very pretty, very amusing, very flattering, everything you please but lovable."

"Well, if she only heard you say that!" began Crescenz.

"The carriage has been at the door this long time," cried Madame Rosenberg, tying a large handkerchief over her ears and pink turban. "Let us be off."

Crescenz touched her sister's hand, and whispered: "You see, dear, I was right."

Hildegarde bent her head, but did not speak.

Hamilton heard, saw, but only partly understood. Had Hildegarde been jealous!

The ball at Court was not in the least less brilliant than any of the preceding, but Hamilton was not disposed to admire the rooms, or the fresco paintings, or the candelabra, or even his own form in the long glass, placed so con-

veniently at the door of one of the reception-rooms. Figures in blue and pink crape passed and repassed him scarcely observed, so completely had a form in white, with a wreath of roses in her hair, taken possession of his imagination. His abstraction attracted even the notice of royalty, and it was with a deep blush that Hamilton stammered some excuse when asked why he did not dance as usual.

At ten o'clock he withdrew, bounded down the stairs which he had thought so tiresome to mount a couple of hours before, found his carriage waiting, and drove to the Museum. The contrast was great, but he heeded it not ; Hildergarde was every thing to him. He glanced quickly round the room, and immediately discovered the object of his search walking composedly towards the dancers with a tall officer in the Guards ; he was about to leave the room again in a fit of uncontrollable irritation, when he remembered his engagement with Crescenz. The moment she saw him, she spoke a few words eagerly to Major Stultz, smiled, and then walked a step or two towards him. "I knew you would come," she said with evident pleasure, and showing her little ball-book ; "see, you were written for two dances, that I might be quite sure of being disengaged."

"Thank you," said Hamilton ; "you are very kind. I can remain but one hour, and as your sister seems to have forgotten her engagement

with me, perhaps you will give me the second waltz also?"

"Oh, I dare not; Major Stultz will never consent. I am sure I wish he would go home, he is so sleepy already. But," she added after a pause, "I am quite sure that Hildegarde will dance with you."

In the course of the dance, Hildegarde and her partner came close beside them. Hamilton at first pretended not to observe it, but Crescenz naturally spoke to her sister.

"Mr. Hamilton fancies you will not dance with him, but I am sure he is mistaken; he says he cannot remain more than an hour, so you must promise him the next waltz or galop, whichever it may be."

"If he really wish it," said Hildegarde; "but he looks so very seriously English to-night, that if I were to propose dancing with him, I am sure he will say no!"

"Try me," said Hamilton; "or rather write my name in your book, that I may be sure you are in earnest."

"You must not trust to my memory, for I have neither ball-book nor tablets. I have no one," she added, looking archly toward her sister, "I have no one to supply me with ball-books and bouquets," and she bent her head over her sister's hand, which could scarcely clasp the geraniums, heliotropes, and China roses with which it was filled.

A moment after, she had joined the dancers, and Hamilton stood thoughtfully beside his partner.

"Do you not admire my bouquet?" she asked, holding it coquettishly towards him.

"Exceedingly; for the time of year it is beautiful."

"Major Stultz waited at the door to give it to me. It was an attention I never expected from him."

"Why not?" asked Hamilton, absently.

"Oh, because he was so many years a soldier and in the wars, and in Russia, and all that. I thought it was only young—a—a—persons—with whom one danced—who gave bouquets."

"Very true," said Hamilton, laughing, "and it is disgracefully negligent of young—a—persons to forget such things sometimes."

"I assure you," stammered Crescenz, "I did not mean—I did not think——"

"I know you did not," said Hamilton.

"He knows you *never* think, my dear," said Madame Berger, who had overheard the last words when taking the place behind them.

"She never thinks or says anything unkind," said Hamilton, warmly.

Madame Berger looked up saucily, and then turned to her partner, a gay student, to listen to some nonsense about her long blonde ringlets.

"Lina is angry that you have not asked her to dance," said Crescenz, as she returned to join

her mother. "Suppose you were to waltz with her next time ; I know Hildegarde will not be in the least offended."

Hamilton shook his head. "I am not so much afraid of giving offence as you are ; besides, you may be mistaken."

"No," said Crescenz, "I am sure I am right, for I remember her saying she would keep a waltz for you, and you said you could not come at all. Oh, I remember it, for I was so sorry when you said so, that I did not care at all for the ball, or my new dress, or——"

Hamilton unconsciously pressed Crescenz's hands, her heightened colour immediately reprimanded him for his imprudence, and he turned to Madame Rosenberg, and asked her how she liked playing *chaperone*?

"Better a great deal than I expected," she answered, laughing ; and then lowering her voice, she added, "our girls are certainly very pretty ; you have no idea how civil all the men are to me on their account. Franz is enjoying a sort of triumph to-night, but the Major is not quite satisfied ; he says the young officers have been talking nonsense to Crescenz, for she has been blushing every moment. Now, I have told him a hundred times it is from the heat of the room and the exertion of dancing. It would be better if he would go down to the club-room and smoke his pipe ; he cannot expect the child to sit beside him all the evening as she does at

home. She has very properly done her duty, and already danced twice with him, and more he cannot require. He has no sort of tact, the Major. Fancy his wanting her to fix her wedding-day just now, when she is thinking of anything in the world but her marriage. I never knew anything in the world so injudicious."

Poor Crescenz had been condemned to a place between her mother and Major Stultz. Hildegard had emancipated herself completely; she hung on her proud father's arm, walked about the rooms, and talked unrestrainedly. Hamilton had to seek her when the music again commenced; she left her father directly, and walked towards the dancing-room, but scarcely had she entered it when Count Raimund approached, exclaiming, "Where are you going, Hildegard? do not forget that this galop is mine."

"No, Oscar, it was the second that I promised you."

"That cannot be, Hildegard, for I am engaged to dance it with a—Marie. I believe—I am quite certain—you promised me this one."

"And I am *quite sure*, Oscar, that you are mistaken. *Quite sure!*" began Hildegard, with her usual decision of manner, but the angry expression of her cousin's countenance made her hesitate. "Perhaps, however," she added, looking from one to the other, "perhaps, as Mr. Hamilton is an Englishman, and does not care about dancing, he will be rather pleased than

otherwise in being released from what he probably considered a duty dance."

"By no means," said Hamilton, firmly holding the hand which she endeavoured to withdraw, "I am not so indifferent as you seem to imagine. You have promised to dance with me, and I am not disposed to release you from your engagement."

"Nor I, either," said Count Raimund, while the blood mounted to his temples, and was even visible under the roots of his fair hair.

"You think, perhaps, I ought to feel flattered," said Hildegard, scornfully, "but I do not—on the contrary I think you both, I mean to say—Oscar extremely disagreeable. I shall not dance with either of you," she added, seating herself on a bench, and beginning to tap her foot impatiently on the floor. The two young men placed themselves on either side of her.

"I hope," she said, turning to Count Raimund, "I hope you are satisfied, now that you have deprived me of the pleasure of dancing a galop, to which I have been looking forward for the last half hour?"

"My satisfaction depends entirely on who the person may be with whom you anticipated so much pleasure in dancing."

"You know perfectly well that I was not engaged to you, and did not think of you."

Count Raimund played with the hilt of his sword, which he had laid on the form beside him.

"Oscar," continued Hildegarde, after a pause, in a low voice, "don't be so unjust, so tyrannical as to deprive me of my galop. Choose somebody else. See, there is Marie still disengaged—go quickly, before anyone else can——"

"Thank you," said Raimund, interrupting her; "you are very kind, but I have no inclination whatever that way. Marie may be very good for household purposes, but I must say I rejoice in the idea that our marriage will free me from these ball-room duties towards a person I have scarcely learned to tolerate. In fact, I believe I detest her, so has she been forced upon me!"

"Oscar, Oscar—take care! Do not speak so loud. What would people think of you, were you to be heard? Someone may tell Marie, and make her repent her disinterested conduct towards you—she does not deserve to be made unhappy, especially by you!"

"What did you say, sir?" cried Raimund, speaking angrily, across Hildegarde to Hamilton.

"I have not had time to say anything," he replied, laughing.

"But you looked as if you agreed with my cousin?"

"My looks are expressive, it seems," said Hamilton, coolly.

"Perhaps you intend to inform my betrothed of what I have just now said?" cried Raimund, still more angrily.

"My acquaintance with her is of too recent a date to admit of my doing so."

"Do you mean deliberately to insult me?" asked Raimund, in a voice of suppressed rage.

"No, Oscar," cried Hildegarde, laying her hand hastily on his arm. "It is you who are endeavouring to commence a quarrel with Mr. Hamilton. You feel that you are in the wrong, and that you ought not to have made such a remark in public of a person to whom you are to be married in less than a week."

"*You* may say what you please to me, Hildegarde, but neither Mr. Hamilton nor anyone else shall dare by word or look to imply——"

Hamilton turned away with a smile of unequivocal contempt.

"What do you mean, sir?" cried Raimund, starting from his seat, and facing him while he folded his arms.

"I mean that this is no place for such words—still less for such gestures," replied Hamilton, glancing round him. The loudness of the music, however, had prevented them from being heard.

"Oscar," cried Hildegarde, vehemently, "sit down beside me. Listen to me—you *must* listen to me. You are altogether in the wrong—you are rude and irritating, and ought to be ashamed of yourself. Do not try Mr. Hamilton's patience further."

"I have no intention of doing so," said Raimund, biting his lip, and frowning fearfully.

Hildegarde looked anxiously, first on her cousin and then at Hamilton, to whom she said in a low voice : " I don't know which is most to be feared, your coolness—or Oscar's ungovernable temper ! But this I have determined, that neither shall stir from this place until a reconciliation has taken place. You, Oscar, are bound to apologise for your unprovoked rudeness, and——"

" Ha, ha ! " laughed Raimund. " You are a most excellent mediatrix, my charming cousin, but believe me, explanations are better avoided. See, we have already forgotten the whole affair."

Hildegarde looked uneasily towards Hamilton, he appeared to be intently watching the dancers as they flew past him.

" It is useless your trying to deceive me," she began, once more turning to Raimund ; but he immediately interrupted her by saying, " Pray, is all this unnecessary anxiety on my account, or—on his ? "

" My anxiety is divided. Surely," she continued, almost in a whisper, " you will not be so foolish as to commence a quarrel in this unreasonable manner ? What will Marie and her mother think, should they hear of it ? What right had you to ask for an explanation of Mr. Hamilton's looks ? You are seeking a quarrel, and do you think by acting in this manner you are likely to increase my regard for you ? Oh, Oscar ! have you forgotten what you said about

a double crime——” The music played loudly, and Hildegarde bent towards her cousin, and continued to speak for some time. Raimund’s countenance cleared by degrees, he raised his eyes to her face with an expression of undisguised admiration and love, and then whispered an answer, which made her blush and turn away.

“You know your influence with me is unbounded. On this condition I will do or say whatever you please,” he added, endeavouring to catch her eye.

“It is ungenerous of you to take advantage of my fears,” said Hildegarde, rising.

Hamilton asked her if she wished to return to her father ; she seemed scarcely to hear him, appearing lost in thought for some moments. She again consulted the countenance of her two companions, again became anxious, and finally turning to Raimund, said, with some embarrassment, “After all, it is not worth talking so much about—I accept the condition—perform your promise.”

“Time and place to be chosen by me ? ” said Raimund, loud and eagerly.

“Do not make any more conditions,” cried Hildegarde, impatiently, “but perform your promise at once.”

“This must be understood,” said Raimund, “or else——”

Hamilton felt himself growing very angry ; he turned to leave them, when Count Raimund

called him back : " Mr. Hamilton, a moment, if you please. Hildegarde has convinced me that I have been altogether in the wrong just now. If I have offended you, I am sorry for it ; I hope you do not expect me to say more ! "

" I did not expect you to say so much," replied Hamilton, coldly.

A sudden flush once more overspread Raimund's face, an internal struggle seemed to take place, but after a glance towards Hildegarde, he said calmly, " If I did not feel that I had been the aggressor, not even the offered bribe could have induced me to apologise."

" Bribe—offered ! " exclaimed Hildegarde, almost indignantly.

" No, not offered. Favour conceded, if you like it better—we will not dispute about words. Mr. Hamilton, my cousin is free, and can dance when she pleases."

" I imagine she could have done so before, had she wished it," said Hamilton, haughtily.

Raimund walked away as if he had not heard him, and buckled on his sword with an air of perfect satisfaction.

Hamilton stood by Hildegarde as if he were turned to stone. The words which had been so mysteriously spoken seemed to have completely petrified him. Hildegarde, too, stood immovable for a minute, and then turned as if to leave him.

" Do you not wish to dance ? " asked Hamilton, in a constrained voice.

"No—I mean yes—yes, of course," she replied, moving mechanically towards the dancers.

Hamilton's feelings at this moment would be difficult to define. As he put his arm round her slight figure, intense hatred was perhaps, for the instant, predominant—he was in such a state of angry excitement that he had gone quite round the room before he perceived that he was actually carrying Hildegarde, who was entreating him to stop.

"Get me a glass of water," she said, moving unsteadily towards the refreshment-room, and sinking on a chair behind the door. She had become deadly pale, and was evidently suffering, but seemed determined to conquer the unusual weakness which threatened to overcome her.

When Hamilton again stood by her, he no longer felt angry ; bending towards her he whispered, "If you repent any hasty promise which you may have made to your cousin, I shall be happy to be the bearer of any message or explanation."

"Repent !" murmured Hildegarde, "no ; I have promised, and I don't repent ; but you—you must not speak any more this evening to Oscar ; he has apologised for his rudeness, and I know you are too generous ever to refer to the subject again."

"But he spoke of some bribe—some favour," began Hamilton.

"That is my affair, and not yours," replied Hildegarde, rising as the dancers began to pour

into the room. "And now take me to my father. After all," she added, forcing a smile, "I believe I have wasted a great deal of genuine alarm on a pair of very worthless young men."

"So it was not repentance about this promised favour, but anxiety about us, which has nearly caused you to faint?"

"Just so—my fears perhaps magnified the danger—but there was danger, more than you were aware of. Avoid my cousin," she added, earnestly, "he is reckless now, but I trust better times are in store for him." Though still fearfully pale, she walked steadily towards the end of the room where her father and mother were standing.

Raimund saw Hamilton leaving the room a few minutes afterwards, with hasty steps and a disturbed countenance. He looked after him, and observed, with a sarcastic smile, to an acquaintance who was near him. "I have spoiled that Englishman's supper; he is not likely to enjoy his *pâté de fois gras* or champagne under the orange-trees at Court to-night!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

A DAY OF FREEDOM.

SOME days passed over remarkably tranquilly. Crescenz's marriage was to take place in a fortnight, and she and Hildegarde had promised to be bridesmaids to Marie de Hoffmann the

beginning of the ensuing week. Hildegarde made no further effort to warn Hamilton about her cousin ; perhaps she now deemed it unnecessary, as the young men openly showed their mutual antipathy, and avoided even the most formal intercourse.

One fine afternoon, when Hamilton was about to drive out in his sledge, he perceived Crescenz hovering about him mysteriously. Major Stultz, who was in the room, seemed to embarrass her, but at length she murmured, in French, "I have something to say to you."

"I have been aware of it for the last half hour, and have remained here on purpose to hear it," said Hamilton.

"You always forget that Mr. Hamilton speaks German perfectly well, Crescenz," observed Major Stultz. "I take it for granted you have no secret from me !"

"Oh, dear, no," said Crescenz, with a slight laugh, "I always speak French when I am not thinking of anything in particular. You know for many years I never spoke any other language"; and while she spoke, she carelessly upset her work-basket, the contents of which rolled in all directions on the painted floor.

"Dear me ! How awkward I am !" she exclaimed, half laughing, while Major Stultz, with evident difficulty, began to pick up the dispersed articles. "My scarlet wool is behind the sofa ; Mr. Hamilton, will you be so kind——"

Hamilton moved the sofa. There was no scarlet wool, but a slip of paper dropped from Crescenz's hand ; he immediately took possession of it, and her eyes sparkled with pleasure. "Thank you, thank you, I believe I have everything now. Oh, by-the-by, Mr. Hamilton, if you have time, I wish you would call on Lina Berger, and ask her why she has not been here since the ball ?"

Hamilton hesitated.

"Tell her my wedding-day is fixed, and I want to consult her about my veil. You will go to her, I hope ?"

"If—you—wish it—but——"

"No buts, I hate buts," said Crescenz, laughing, and then making an inexplicable grimace to him apart.

When out of the room, he inspected the slip of paper, on which was written in French :

"You have offended Lina Berger by not dancing with her. Make up your quarrel as fast as you can, or we shall lose all chance of going to the masquerade."

"I had forgotten all about the masquerade," thought Hamilton, "and must make my peace directly with the little person. She shall drive out with me this very day to arrange matters. Fortunately, she has said at least half a dozen times that she likes sledging—I ought to have taken the hint long ago——"

What his excuses were is not recorded—they did not seem to interest him particularly, as only

the result is known. Madame Berger drove out in his sledge, the party was arranged, and the next morning, at breakfast, a note was brought to Madame Rosenberg, offering Dr. Berger's carriage and horses for the day of the masquerade.

"How good-natured of Lina to remember that I wished to see my father and introduce the Major to him," she exclaimed, handing the neatly-written note to her husband ; "I would rather it had been any other day than Monday, as you know Mademoiselle de Hoffmann's marriage is to take place on Tuesday, and it will be disagreeable returning home so early the next day ; however, that cannot be avoided."

"Easily enough, I should think," observed Mr. Rosenberg, quietly ; "Mr. Hamilton has often proposed lending us his horses and all days are alike to him, I know."

Before Hamilton could answer, Madame Rosenberg exclaimed, "His horses ? Not for any consideration in the world ! Besides, his sledge is only for two persons and a servant, and I wish to take the boys and the Major with us."

"In that case, I think we had better take a job carriage for a day and a half."

"No use in paying for what we can have for nothing," said Madame Rosenberg ; "so if you have no objection, I shall accept the offer."

"As you please," said her husband ; "A visit to the iron-works is not exactly what I enjoy most in the world."

"Crescenz," said Madame Rosenberg, taking no notice of this remark, "Crescenz, just put on your bonnet, and slip over to old Madame Lustig's ; ask her if she can take charge of you and Hildegarde on Monday ; but she must spend the whole day here, and promise to sleep in the nursery."

Crescenz left the room, not without slightly glancing towards Hamilton, and primly pressing her lips together to repress a smile.

"I don't like Madame Lustig," said Hildegarde, abruptly.

"Why?" asked Hamilton.

"Because she so evidently tries to please everybody."

"Better than evidently trying to please no one," said her mother, sharply. "However, whether you like her or not, if she take charge of you and Crescenz on Monday, I expect you will do whatever she desires, and consider her as in my place."

Hildegarde looked up as if about to remonstrate, caught her father's eyes, and then bent over her coffee-cup without speaking.

Madame Lustig made no difficulties and many promises. She arrived the next morning, when they were all breakfasting together, at an unusually early hour, listened patiently to Madame Rosenberg's directions about locking the house-door, and fastening the windows, and examining the stoves, and then accompanied them to the

carriage with Hamilton, Hildegarde, and Crescenz. Major Stultz seemed very much inclined to remain behind, but Crescenz whispered rather loudly, "that mamma had been so kind about her *trousseau*, that he ought to visit grandpapa."

"What an artful little animal it is, after all!" thought Hamilton, "and how different from——" He looked towards Hildegarde, who, all unconscious of their plans, after having twisted a black silk scarf round her father's neck, stood rubbing her hands, and slightly shivering in the cold morning air.

"Adieu, adieu," was repeated in every possible tone, while the carriage drove off. A moment afterwards, Crescenz was scampering up the stairs, dragging Madame Lustig after her; and when Hamilton and Hildegarde, who followed more leisurely, reached the door, they were obliged to remain there, for Crescenz, dancing a galop with Madame Lustig, was now forcing her backwards the whole length of the passage at a tremendous pace, the jolly old woman keeping the step, and springing with all her might for fear of falling. Hamilton and Hildegarde looked on, laughing.

At length they stopped for want of breath. "Well—what—shall we—do first?" said Crescenz, twisting up her hair, which had fallen on her shoulders.

"Do!" panted Madame Lustig, as she leaned against the wall. "You have nearly—killed me

—this is not the way to make me able to go to the masqu——”

In a moment, Crescenz's apron was over her head, and a new struggle began.

“I asked you what we should do first?” cried Crescenz, laughing, “suppose—suppose we make ice-cream? Mamma has left me the keys, and allowed me to take whatever I like from the store-room. You have a good receipt, I am sure; let us make the cream, and Mr. Hamilton and Hildegarde can turn it round in the ice-pail!”

“Shall we not first arrange with Walburg about the dinner?”

“Oh, dinner! how very disagreeable to be obliged to eat dinner! Cannot we for once, just by way of a joke,” she said coaxingly, “have something instead of dinner?”

“Soup, boiled beef, and steam noodles are, however, not to be despised; and that is what your mother ordered,” said Madame Lustig; “besides, on Mr. Hamilton's account, you ought——”

“Oh, I have no objection to dining on ice-cream,” said Hamilton, laughing.

“You see!” said Crescenz, “Mr. Hamilton is so—so—— You see he will do whatever we wish. Let us make some cakes out of the cookery-book, and then we can all be merry together in the kitchen!”

A sort of compromise was made. The soup and boiled beef were allowed, but the ice-cream

and several kinds of cakes were to be forthwith fabricated. Madame Lustig was, like most Germans in her station in life, an excellent cook; she was also a good-humoured, thoughtless person, and soon became quite as unrestrained as her young companions. Her cap and false curls were laid aside, her sleeves tucked up, a capacious white apron bound over her black silk dress, and she was immediately employed in beating up eggs and pounding sugar. Hamilton amused himself singing aloud the cookery-book in recitative, until, in the course of time, he was duly established with Hildegarde near a window in the corridor, a large bucket of ice between them, in which was placed the pail containing the cream. They turned it round alternately, and Crescenz occasionally inspected the process, dancing with delight as it began to freeze.

"Oh, dear! how nice! I hope it will not melt before Lina Berger comes. Is this window cool enough?"

"Cool!" said Hildegarde, laughing; "try it for a few minutes, and you will say cold, I think."

"Could you not spare Mr. Hamilton for a little while, Hildegarde? We want him to pound sugar; our arms positively ache, and Walburg is not yet come back from market."

Hildegarde made no objection, and Hamilton was conducted back to the kitchen, from whence, immediately, repeated bursts of laughter issued.

The arrival of Madame Berger seemed to increase the noise ; she closed the kitchen-door, but Hildegarde distinctly heard the words : "Congratulate—freedom for one day at least—make good use—amusement—Hildegarde—hush." A short whispering ensued, and at length Madame Lustig made her appearance, inspected the ice-cream, and proposed putting it outside the window. "There is no use in your tormenting yourself longer, my dear," she said, smiling ; "we have something else to interest us ; come, we must hold a consultation."

"About what?" asked Hildegarde.

"About a masquerade ; were you ever at one?"

"Oh, yes, at school we had one almost every year ; I was always ordered to be a Greek or a Circassian."

"Ah, that was children's play among ourselves ; but I mean a real masquerade !"

"You mean the public masquerades—at the theatre, perhaps?"

"Just so ; should you like to go to one?"

"To be sure I should, of all things !" cried Hildegarde, eagerly. "When is it?"

"To-night."

Her countenance fell. "Oh, if we had only known it sooner. If we had only been able to ask papa !"

"There ! I told you," cried Madame Berger, coming out of the kitchen, followed by the others,

"I knew she would make all sort of difficulties, and spoil Crescenz's pleasure ! "

"I am sure," said Madame Lustig, "neither your father or mother would have any objection ; when I go with you, and Madame Berger, and Mr. Hamilton."

"It is true mamma said I was to do whatever you desired me——" began Hildegarde, with some hesitation.

"Oh, I will *command* your attendance, if that will be any relief to your conscience," cried Madame Lustig, with a loud laugh.

Hildegarde coloured deeply, and looked towards Hamilton ; he was eating almonds and raisins from a plate, which Madame Berger held towards him. "Let us talk about our masks, and not about our consciences," cried the latter. "I must go home to dinner, or the Doctor will be impatient. We are to be black bats ; black silk dresses ; black dominoes, with hanging sleeves, and hoods ; masks half black, and a knot of white ribbon under the chin, that we may know each other. How many dominoes shall I order ? "

"For us all, Lina, for us all ! " cried Crescenz, eagerly.

"We may as well dress at your house," cried Madame Lustig. It is not necessary that Walburg should know anything about the matter. The Doctor will have gone out before seven."

"Oh, yes, you may come at half-past six ; I

must have time to dress Mr. Hamilton as well as myself, you know ! Adieu, *au revoir*."

Immediately after dinner, Hildegarde put on a black dress, and came to the drawing-room where Hamilton was sitting, or rather reclining, on the sofa, reading ; she leaned slightly over him, and almost in a whisper asked if he were disposed to give her advice, should she request it.

"I don't know," answered Hamilton, looking up with a smile ; "I have been so long dismissed from the office of preceptor, that I have quite got out of the habit of giving advice."

"Forget that you have been preceptor, and take the name of friend," said Hildegarde ; "we shall get on better, I think."

"I like the proposition," cried Hamilton, quickly rising from his recumbent position, "our ages are suitable. Let us," he added, laughing, "let us now swear an eternal friendship."

"Agreed," said Hildegarde, accepting his offered hand. "And now, tell me, shall I go to this masquerade or not ?"

"I thought you had already decided !"

"Not quite. I wish very much to go, that is the simple truth ; but I fear, that under the name of obedience to Madame Lustig I am trying to persuade myself, that I am following my mother's injunctions ; while, in fact, I am only seeking an excuse to do what I wish. Do you understand me ?"

"Perfectly."

"And you think, perhaps, I ought not to go?"

"I think—indeed I am sure, that I can give you no advice on the subject. I am too much interested in your decision, to be a 'righteous judge.'"

"How are you interested?"

"Simply thus; if you do not go, the whole party is spoiled for me."

Hildegarde was silent for more than a minute. She did not disclaim; she knew he had spoken his thoughts. "If," she said at length, "if I had only known it in time to have asked my father's leave, I really do think he would have had no objection."

"If you think that, you may decide on going with a clear conscience."

"Is this your opinion—advice?"

"I give no advice," said Hamilton, laughing, "I only wish you to go."

"Then—I—will go," said Hildegarde, thoughtfully; "go—notwithstanding a kind of misgiving which I cannot overcome, a sort of a warning—a presentiment——"

"I should rather have suspected your sister of having misgivings and warnings, than you," said Hamilton; "yet she seems to have none."

"She is governed by her wishes, and Lina Berger; besides, it is not likely that anything unpleasant should occur to her!"

"And to you?" asked Hamilton, surprised.

"Not likely, either," said Hildegarde, gayly ; "for thank goodness, Oscar must spend the evening with Marie, when they are to be married to-morrow."

Raimund had been but once at the Rosenberg's since the ball, and had played cards the whole evening. Hamilton knew that she had not since spoken to him. Yet, no sooner had she pronounced her cousin's name, than all his feelings changed ; he bit his lip, and walked to the window.

"I wish—" began Hildegarde, but she suddenly stopped, for she recognised Raimund's voice speaking to her sister in the passage. Hamilton strode across the room.

"Oh, stay ! stay, I entreat of you !" she cried, anxiously.

"Do you not wish to be alone with your cousin ?"

"No, no, no—that is," she added, hurriedly, "yes—perhaps it is better——"

"As you please," said Hamilton, moving again towards the door.

Hildegarde seemed greatly embarrassed. "If you would only promise not to say anything to make——"

"I really do not understand you," cried Hamilton, impatiently.

"When he has been here for a minute or two," she said, quickly, "go for Crescenz and Madame Lustig, say they must come here—must

remain——” Her cousin entered the room while she was speaking.

“I am sorry to interrupt you, my dear Hildegarde,” he said, with a stiff and evidently forced smile, “but I come to take leave ——”

“Take leave ! what do you mean ? ”

“I am to be executed to-morrow, you know.”

“Ah !—so——”

“It is particularly kind of you and Crescenz to put on mourning for me beforehand,” he continued, glancing gravely at her black dress.

“Oscar, how can you talk so ? ” said Hildegarde, reproachfully ; “such jesting is, to-day, particularly ill-timed.”

“By heaven, I am not jesting. I never was less disposed to mirth than at this moment,” he answered, falling heavily into a chair, and drawing his handkerchief across his forehead.

“Have you been with Marie ? ”

“Yes.”

“And you will return to her ? ”

“I suppose I must.”

“Here Hamilton precipitately left the room to summon Madame Lustig and Crescenz, but they were much too busily engaged in the manufacture of a complicated cake to follow him, so he hurried back alone to the drawing-room, and found Hildegarde——in her cousin’s arms. She was not struggling, she did not even move as he entered, while Raimund, not in the least disconcerted by his presence, passionately kissed her

two or three times. At length she suddenly and vehemently pushed him from her, exclaiming, "Go, I hate you !"

"You hate me ! hate me, did you say ? Let me hear that once more, Hildegarde," he said, losing every trace of colour as he spoke.

"No, no—I don't hate you—but you have acted very—very ungenerously," said Hildegarde, with ill-suppressed emotion.

"I understand you ; but you will forgive me this last offence, I hope ?"

"Yes, I forgive you, and will try to forgive you all you have done to worry and alarm me since our acquaintance began," said Hildegarde, bitterly, "but this must indeed be the last offence."

"It will be, most certainly," said Raimund ; and, taking both her hands, he looked at her long and earnestly, and then left the room without in any manner noticing Hamilton.

A long pause ensued. Hamilton's eyes were riveted on his book, which he had again taken up ; but he never turned over the leaf, nor did he move when he became conscious that Hildegarde was standing beside him.

"That was the fulfilment of the promise made at the ball on Saturday," she at length said, in a very low voice. "I knew that his mind was in a state of unusual irritation, and his claiming a dance which I had not promised him proved his wish to quarrel with you. My fears alone made me consent."

Hamilton turned round. A light seemed suddenly to break upon him ; and Hildegarde's motives for many inexplicable actions became at once apparent. His first impulse was to tell her so, and to assure her of his increased admiration and affection ; but he recollected, just at the right moment, that all such explanations from him were a waste of words and time ; that he had told her so more than once himself. So, after a short but violent internal struggle, he said, with forced serenity, " My reliance on you will henceforth be unbounded."

She seemed perfectly satisfied with this answer. Notwithstanding its *laconicism*, she fully understood the extent of confidence which would in future be placed in her, and she left the room with a light heart.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE MASQUERADE.

FOUR muffled figures quitted the Rosenbergs' apartments about six o'clock in the evening, and not long after, a light figure bounded up the stairs, and knocked with closed hand on the door. Walburg cautiously looked through the grated aperture ; but on recognising Count Raimund, she immediately opened it.

"Where are your ladies gone? I saw them leaving the house a few minutes ago.

"They are gone to spend the evening with Madame Berger, I believe."

"Did you hear them say anything about going to the masquerade?"

"No; but Miss Crescenz did nothing but run about and whisper the last half hour, and Madame Lustig took the house-keys with her, and said I might go to bed if they were not home before ten o'clock. I am almost sure they intend to go to the masquerade; and Miss Crescenz might have trusted me, as I should never have said anything about it."

"Perhaps you are mistaken," said Raimund, absently. "At all events, it is better to say nothing about it to Madame Rosenberg," and he slowly descended the stairs, and walked towards Dr. Berger's house, remaining in the street near it until he saw the five black masked figures enter a carriage. Though all studiously dressed alike, he easily recognised Madame Berger's small, and Madame Lustig's stout figure, while Hildegard and Crescenz were sufficiently above the usual height to make the group remarkable.

It was early when they entered the theatre, but the house was already crowded, the tiers of boxes were filled with spectators, who, later in the evening, joined the masks in the large ball-room formed by the junction of the pit and stage. Crescenz became alarmed when surrounded by a number of speaking masks, and clung to Hamilton's arm. Madame Berger and

Madame Lustig, on the contrary, laughed and talked with a freedom which rather shocked Hamilton. Hildegard at first answered gayly all who addressed her ; for she felt that she was perfectly unknown ; but after some time she perceived that two masks had joined their party, and seemed determined to remain with them. A slight young Turk had attached himself to Madame Berger, while a mysterious black domino followed her like a shadow.

"How much pleasanter it must be to look on from above !" she observed, at length ; "one has all the amusement without the press and anxiety of the crowd."

"Oh, dear ! I have got quite used to it now," said Crescenz, "and I am not at all afraid."

"If there are places in the boxes to be had," said Hamilton, "and you are willing to leave this turmoil, I am quite sure I can procure them for you."

"Oh, thank you, let us ask Madame Lustig."

But Madame Lustig protested against the plan. She could not allow them to leave her—it would be quite improper if they were to be seen alone with Mr. Hamilton—indeed, she would rather they were not seen at all, and she positively could not leave Madame Berger with that troublesome Turk, not having the least idea who he might be !

"There is no use in asking Lina," said Crescenz to Hamilton, who had moved towards

Madame Berger. And, indeed, all his arguments proved vain. "People should not go to masquerades who did not know how to enjoy themselves! She had no idea of coming to the theatre to mope away the evening in a box—she could do that four times every week; besides, the presence of Mr. Hamilton was necessary for propriety's sake, and she could not, and would not dispense with his attendance." All this was poured forth with a volubility, in French, that attracted the attention of the by-standers. "No, the gay little devil of a masque must not think of going, nor her corpulent friend either!" and they were again drawn on with the crowd: Hamilton followed with the sisters, who now ceased altogether to speak. Crescenz had also become aware that they were followed by a black, taciturn figure, which, as she whispered to Hamilton, put her in mind of the Inquisition, and all sorts of horrors.

"But," said Hildegarde, who had heard her remark, "we are also quite black, and probably make the same disagreeable impression on other people."

"He seems quite unknown! I have not seen him speak to any human being," said Crescenz.

"Neither have we, for the last half hour," answered her sister.

"Oh, my dear, if *you* have no objection to having him at your elbow all the evening, I have

nothing more to say," cried Crescenz; "that is quite a matter of taste."

"Is he annoying you in any way?" asked Hamilton.

"Not in the least," answered Hildegarde. "The crowd is so great that he could not easily leave us, even if he wished it."

In the meantime, Madame Berger and Madame Lustig, encouraged by the masks around them, had begun to follow the unmasked groups who had descended from the boxes. They knew the private histories of most persons, and were so unmerciful in their remarks—so mischievous in the distribution of their *bon-bons* and devices, that they at length found it expedient to plan a retreat, which was no longer easy, as they were followed by several persons who wished to find out who they were. A dance which was to be performed by the *corps de ballet*, in costume, seemed to favour them. They had only time to whisper to each other, "Home, as fast as possible, by the front door of the theatre," when they were pushed about and separated in all directions. Several coaches were in attendance, Hamilton immediately procured one, and they were soon in it laughing merrily over their adventures.

"How well we all managed to come together, after all!" cried Madame Berger; "I really had begun to fear we should not get rid of my Turk—who could he have been!"

"I don't know," said Madame Lustig, yawning,

"but I am glad that we five are safely together again, and not running about looking for each other, which might easily have happened."

"It often does happen," said Madame Berger, counting her companions, "one, two, three, four, five—There was a black familiar of the Inquisition following Hildegarde all night ; I really was afraid he might have been among us."

To her house, according to agreement, they all repaired to change their dresses. Hamilton assisted them to descend from the carriage ; the last person sprang unaided to the ground, threw the black domino back, with a quick wave of the hand, and discovered the figure of the Turk. "Good-night, Madame Berger," he cried in a feigned voice, "good-night—good-night," and with a gay laugh he darted down the street.

"Was there ever anything so provoking !" exclaimed Madame Berger, in a voice denoting great annoyance. "What have I said to him to-night ? or rather, what have I not said to him ? How vexatious—he must have borrowed a domino from a friend in order to get among us !"

"But," cried Madame Lustig, in a voice of alarm, "one of us must have been left behind."

"It must be Crescenz," cried Hamilton. "I will return to the theatre directly for her."

"It must be Hildegarde," cried Crescenz, who stood beside him.

Without uttering a word, he sprang into the carriage, and the coachman drove off. His

anxiety was indescribable ; in the crowd he had felt the absolute necessity of releasing the arm of one of the sisters, and deceived by the extreme likeness in their figures, had almost forcibly retained Crescenz, who chanced to be at the moment followed by the silent mask, and whom he consequently mistook for her sister.

At the theatre he dismissed the coachman, and began making inquiries. "A black domino alone, separated from a party of friends?" Numbers of black dominoes had been seen—many had been separated from their friends! was the usual answer. At length, a footman who had been lounging at a distance, observed, that about half an hour before, a black domino—a lady, had been stunned by a blow from the pole of a carriage, and had been carried off by another black domino.

"That may have been Hildegarde!" cried Hamilton, in a state of fearful anxiety.

"I think that *was* the name he called her," said the man, preparing to walk away.

"He! Who is he?" asked Hamilton.

"I don't know—he said he lived close by, and that he was a near relation."

"Raimund!" almost groaned Hamilton, as he rushed out of the theatre towards the lodgings, which he knew were in one of the adjoining streets.

The door at one side of the entrance-gate was slightly ajar, it had probably been left so by some

servants who had stolen off to the masquerade, and did not wish to announce their return by ringing the bell. Raimund's rooms were on the ground floor, a couple of steps led to them. Hamilton ascended—the door was open—he entered a narrow passage, and stood opposite the entrance to one of the chambers, knocked first gently, then loudly ; shook the door ; no sound reached him ; at length he moved towards another door and called out, “ Hildegarde, for heaven's sake, if you are here, answer me ! ” He thought now he heard some one moving in the room.

“ Let me in—open the door,” he cried, pushing with all his strength against it.

“ Wait a moment,” said a voice which he with difficulty recognised as Hildegarde's, “ wait—I must—take the key from—”

“ Heaven and earth, Hildegarde ! How can you be so calm, when you know how anxious we must be about you ! Are you alone ? ”

“ No—yes,” she answered, quite close to the door.

“ Count Raimund, you have no right to make a prisoner of your cousin. Open the door directly,” cried Hamilton, shaking it until the hinges rattled.

He heard at length the key placed, with a trembling hand, in the lock—it turned and Hildegarde stood before him. The hood of her capuchin was thrown back, and her features,

deadly pale and rigid in an expression of horror, met his view. She pointed silently towards a figure lying on the ground, which, when Hamilton approached, he found to be the corpse of her cousin ! He must have shot himself through the mouth, for the upper part of his head, hair, and brain were scattered in frightful bloody masses around. A more hideous object could hardly be imagined ; he turned away, and seizing Hildegarde's hand, drew her out of the room, while he whispered, " What a dreadful scene for you to have witnessed ! "

Scarcely were they in the street when, putting her hand to her head, she exclaimed, " My gloves—mask—handkerchief, are in his room—is it of any consequence ? "

" Of the greatest," cried Hamilton. " If your name be on the handkerchief, it may lead to most unpleasant inquiries. Wait here. I must return to the room."

As he entered the room for the second time he observed an appearance of confusion in it which, in his haste and anxiety about Hildegarde, had before escaped his observation. Her gloves and handkerchief he found near the stove, and not far from them, to his great surprise, a dagger ! On the table, beside the small shaded lamp, stood a wine bottle and tumblers, writing materials, and several letters were heaped together ; and, on glancing towards them, he found one addressed to Hildegarde, which he immediately put in his

pocket, and then prepared to leave ; but, to his dismay, he heard the sound of approaching voices, and at once his unpleasant, perhaps dangerous, situation occurred to him. His known enmity to Raimund made it absolutely necessary for him to endeavour to leave the house without being recognised, and, having tied on Hildgarde's mask, he took refuge in a small wood-room, ready to escape the first opportunity that should offer. The persons whose voices he had heard were servants ; one of them, a French girl, was speaking while he gained his hiding-place, and he heard her say, "The old lady desired me to call her son, I would not go into his room for all the world at this time of night."

"What does she want with him ?"

"Oh, she says she heard the report of a gun or pistol a short time ago, and is alarmed. She asked me if I had not heard it too ?"

"And did you hear it ?"

"How could I when I was not in the house ? The best thing I can do is to say that Count Oscar is not yet returned home. I am afraid she won't believe me, as he never remains late at those Hoffmanns'."

"But you may tell her that I saw him going to the masquerade at nine o'clock in a black domino. We can knock at the door, and if we get no answer, he is not there."

"And if he should answer ?"

"Why, then, we can speak to him together !"

While they knocked at the door, Hamilton glided out ; but not, as he had hoped, unseen, for they turned and ran after him into the street, calling out, "Count Oscar ! Count Oscar ! Madame la Comtesse wishes to speak to you."

Hamilton shook his hand impatiently towards them, which made them desist, and then breathlessly joined Hildegarde, who was standing motionless on the spot where he had left her.

"I ought not to have allowed you to return," she said, clasping her hands convulsively round his arm, "it was thoughtless—selfish of me. Had you been seen !"

"I have been seen, but not recognised," said Hamilton ; "I put on your mask, and some servants mistook me for Count Raimund."

"Can that lead to a discovery ?" asked Hildegarde, stopping in the middle of the cold, cheerless street.

"On the contrary, I rather think it will prevent any discovery being made until to-morrow morning."

"His wedding-day !" said Hildegarde, with a stifled groan. "Oh, what will Marie de Hoffmann think of him ?"

"She will perhaps guess the truth," said Hamilton. "I believe this marriage was the immediate cause of the rash act."

"Perhaps I am also to blame," said Hildegarde, in a scarcely audible voice.

"It may be ; but most innocently, I am sure.

It was not your fault that your cousin loved you so madly."

"I—I—did not exactly mean that," said Hildegarde, with a shudder.

"Then, what did you mean? Tell me all that occurred. That is," added Hamilton, for the first time since he had joined her recurring to his former fears, "that is, if you can."

"I can, and will, though the recollection is most painful," said Hildegarde, in an agitated manner; and, after a moment's pause, she began: "Having been separated from you all, I naturally endeavoured to reach the front door of the theatre, where we had agreed to assemble as soon as possible; always, to my great annoyance, followed by the black domino, who, in the end, proved to be Oscar. Had I known it sooner, it would have saved me a world of horrors. I was excessively alarmed, as you may imagine, and, forgetting my character as mask, inquired, in my natural voice, of everyone I met if they had seen four black dominoes together? Everyone had seen dominoes such as I had described; and after hearing that some had left in carriages and some on foot, I at length determined to walk home alone. Taking advantage of the confusion caused by several parties endeavouring to drive off together, and hoping by that means to escape from the domino who had become an object of terror to me—like a thing in a dream—I ran at full speed out of the theatre. In order to

reach the quieter streets, I unfortunately turned towards the advancing line of carriages; the crowd was enormous, and I was buffeted about in all directions, until at length the pole of a carriage threw me down and completely stunned me."

"So it was you! And were you hurt?" asked Hamilton, anxiously, and stopping to look at his companion. Strange to say, he had, until that moment, forgotten what he had heard at the theatre!

"No, not much; my shoulder is bruised, I believe, but my head fell on the ground, and I was insensible for some minutes. Some one, probably Oscar, must have seized the horses' heads and forced them backwards. When I recovered, I felt myself supported by him, and recognised his voice immediately. There was a terrible stamping of horses, and noise, and swearing about us, and I made a violent effort to walk. With Oscar's assistance, I reached the next street; he proposed my going into his lodgings for a few minutes until I felt stronger, which I at first refused, but becoming so faint when we were passing his house that I could scarcely stand, I thought it better to go willingly than perhaps be carried there in a state of insensibility. A lamp was burning in the room when we entered, and wine was on the table; he poured me out a glass without speaking, which I immediately drank, and then sat down

on the sofa to rest. In the meantime, he walked silently up and down the room, and then returned to the table, where he quickly swallowed several tumblers of wine. Alarmed by his manner, I immediately stood up, and declared that I was quite able to return home. If he were not disposed to accompany me, I would go alone. His answer was locking the door and placing the key in his pocket."

"And you?" asked Hamilton, quickly, "what did you do?"

"I cannot describe the undefined terror which this proceeding caused me; but, on seeing the dagger, with which he had once so frightened me, lying on the table, I suddenly seized it and retreated towards the stove. He asked me what I meant; but I only answered by repeating the words, 'Open the door—let me go—let me go.' He, however, then informed me that he had no intention of doing either the one or the other; he was determined for once that I should hear him, and answer him; and he ordered me peremptorily to give him the dagger. I, of course, refused, and—and——"

"Well," said Hamilton, breathlessly.

"A violent struggle ensued; he wrested it forcibly out of my hand, and, I believe, in trying not to hurt me, was wounded himself, for I saw blood trickling down the blade as he held it triumphantly up in the air. In springing to the other side of the stove I found a bell-rope.

Perhaps I wrong Oscar, but I believe the fear of that bell alone preserved me from further insult."

"He must have been perfectly desperate," observed Hamilton, taking a long breath.

"He appeared so to me," continued Hildergarde, shuddering. "I saw him change colour as I grasped the rope ; but, with wonderful coolness, he advised me to refrain from summoning witnesses to my being in his room at such an hour of the night ; that I had entered willingly, and no human being would believe my assertion of innocence, as unfortunately his reputation was such that mine would be lost should I be seen and recognised. Though trembling with anger, I perceived the justice of his remark, and carefully avoided ringing, though I held the cord tighter than ever. He came nearer and nearer, and talked long about his love, and hatred of you. I was too much agitated to understand much of what he said ; and I believe he perceived it at last, for he threw himself at my feet and declared he would die there. I pushed back his hands with disgust, and told him that he need not hope again to terrify me—I knew he had no thought of dying, but I once more requested him to open the door and give me my liberty. He started up frantically, and taking a small pistol from the table, again approached me. I asked him if he intended to murder me. He looked capable of that or anything else at the

moment, and when he pointed it towards his own head, I—" Hildegarde paused, and covered her face with her hands. Hamilton did not speak, and she again continued. "I did not—indeed, I did not for a moment think him serious, he was such a consummate actor! I had seen him in less than half an hour change from calm to furious so often, that I thought this was only a new effort to work upon my feelings; I never could—had I dreamed of the consequences—at all events, I shall never, never be able to forgive myself!"

"You have not told me what you did," said Hamilton, in a low voice.

"I—laughed—and no sooner had he heard the horrid mocking sound of my forced laughter, than he pulled the trigger, and fell, so horribly mangled, to the ground!" She leaned against the corner of a house, and gasped for breath. "Do you think," she asked, at length, "do you think that I was the immediate cause of his death?"

"No," said Hamilton. "I can give you nearly the assurance that he had intended to commit suicide—this very night perhaps—his table was covered with letters, and one, addressed to you, I brought away with me."

"Now, heaven be praised that this sin is not on my soul!" she cried, fervently, and then added, "I have nothing more to tell you: I don't know how the time passed until you came—it

appeared very long, but I never thought of going away. You will understand why I was so dilatory in opening the door, when you recollect that the key was in the pocket of his waistcoat."

"And now," said Hamilton, hurrying towards Madame Berger's house, "let me recommend secrecy. I do not think anyone will imagine that we know of this melancholy affair. Should we speak of it, we might be suspected of knowing more than we may be disposed to relate."

"I quite agree with you," said Hildegarde, "and have not the slightest wish to speak of it to anyone, not even to my father, for, never having spoken to him about Oscar, my confidence, coming too late, might offend him, as it did about Count Zedwitz."

"You will have to make a great effort, and conceal every appearance of agitation from your sister and Madame Lustig," said Hamilton. "I think we had better avoid the proposed supper at Madame Berger's. Give me your capuchin, and I will bring you your bonnet and cloak."

Hildegarde seated herself on the stairs, and leaned her face on her hands.

Hamilton's appearance without her caused instantaneous and great alarm ; but when he said she was waiting for them on the stairs, they became almost angry.

"So she won't come to supper !" cried Madame Berger. "Just like her, an eternal spoilsport."

"I fear she has caught cold," said Hamilton, looking round for the cloak; "you forget how long she has been in the streets in her light dress."

"But," said Madame Lustig, "she must say she caught cold making the ice-cream at the passage-window. I shall never have courage to confess that we have been at this masquerade, and that she has been running about the streets at this hour of night. Was she far from the theatre when you met her?"

"I found her in —— Street," replied Hamilton, evasively, and beginning to heap up cloaks and boas on his arm.

"Not so fast, if you please," cried Madame Lustig. "Give me my cloak—I have no fancy for catching cold."

"This is too provoking," exclaimed Madame Berger; "I thought we should have had such a merry supper; the Doctor in bed, and everything so nice! Take a glass of wine, at least, before you go, Mr. Hamilton."

He quickly drank the wine, and then ran down-stairs. Hildegard stood up, and allowed him to put the cloak on her shoulders, fasten it, throw her boa round her throat, and even place her bonnet on her head; she merely asked: "Are they coming?"

"Hildegard," cried Madame Berger, who accompanied the others with a candle in her hand, "I take it very ill of you to spoil my supper in

this manner ; you might have come up, if only for half an hour."

"You have caught cold—you are ill," whispered Hamilton, in English.

"I am sorry to spoil your supper-party, Lina, but I am really ill, and must go home," said Hildegarde, in so constrained and husky a voice that Madame Lustig, mistaking it for hoarseness, hurried down the stairs, exclaiming: "Good gracious, the child can hardly speak! What will her father say to me."

About an hour after, while Hamilton was still walking uneasily up and down his room, he heard some one knock at the door. On opening it he was scarcely surprised to see Hildegarde. No trace of colour had returned to her face, but her features had regained their usual calm, statue-like expression.

"I knew I should still find you in this room," she said, with a faint smile. "You may give me my letter ; I can read it now."

It was on the table, and Hamilton pushed it towards her. She sat down drew a candle near her, and, shading her eyes with one hand, held the letter steadily with the other. When she had finished reading it, she gave it to Hamilton, saying: "That is a wild piece of composition ; how fortunate that it fell into your hands! Had it been sent to me, I should have been placed in a most unpleasant position. My father, my mother, would have read it ; I must have explained, and Marie de Hoffmann would perhaps have heard of

Oscar's dislike to her, and have blamed me more than I deserve."

Hamilton read the letter, and when she took it out of his hand, she tore it to pieces. "I wish I could burn these remnants," she said, crushing them together in her hand.

"Nothing more easy," said Hamilton, pointing towards the stove. They walked to it, and deliberately burned the pieces, one by one ; the incoherent sentences becoming once more legible in a charred state before they crumbled into ashes.

"Thank you," said Hildegarde, turning away ; "and now, good-night !"

"Will you not take a candle ; or, shall I light you !" asked Hamilton.

"Neither : I do not wish to wake Walburg."

As Hamilton held the door open, he recollected vividly the last time she had been in his room at night. She was too much preoccupied to think of it ; but, stopping suddenly, she turned to him, and said : "Do you remember my warning, my presentiment of evil ?"

"Perfectly," he answered ; "but I think the idea was caused by your imagining you were about to do something which your father perhaps might not quite approve."

"You account for everything rationally, and will of course not believe me when I tell you that I knew and *felt* beforehand that Oscar would come to our house yesterday, and act precisely as he did."

"I do believe you ; but it was your natural

understanding which made you think he would take advantage of your parent's absence to claim your promise. Then the almost certainty of my presence, to give the performance a zest. Perhaps, however, the strongest motive of all, but which you could not have known, was to take leave of you. I must do him the justice to say, I believe he thought he saw you for the last time then."

"Would that it had been?" said Hildegarde. "I could at least have regretted him as a near relation, and felt pity for his untimely end."

"And do you not feel this!" asked Hamilton.

"No," answered Hildegarde, sternly. "In recalling calmly his words and actions this night, I find him wholly unworthy of esteem. My recollection of him, now stained with blood, is hideous, most horrible." She shuddered while she spoke, and then walked down the dark passage without looking at Hamilton, who held his door open until she had entered her room.

CHAPTER XXXI.

WHERE IS THE BRIDEGROOM?

HAMILTON'S slumbers were disturbed by confused dreams of Hildegarde and Raimund; but towards morning he fell into a heavy sleep, from which he was awakened by the return

of Mr. Rosenberg, his wife and children; the latter, probably to indemnify themselves for their forced good behaviour during their absence, now scampered riotously up and down the corridor, blowing little wooden trumpets, which had been given them by their grandfather just before they had left him.

When Hamilton was dressed, he found the whole family assembled at breakfast, all in high spirits. Crescenz sprang to meet him in her bridesmaid's dress, looking so pretty that Major Stultz's laboured compliments were for once not only pardonable, but even allowable.

"Only think!" she exclaimed, "Hildegarde does not like being bridesmaid, though Marie is much more her friend than mine! She says she has got a headache, and a cold."

"I knew," observed Madame Lustig, "I knew she would catch cold, when I saw her turning the ice-cream yesterday. I ought not to have permitted it."

"The cold is not of much importance," observed Madame Rosenberg; "I rather think she dislikes putting on a thin white muslin dress in the morning."

"A very natural dislike at this time of year," said her husband. "It makes me freeze only to look at Crescenz."

"Oh, I don't feel at all cold," cried Crescenz; "I was down at the Hoffmanns' too, and there is such a splendid *déjeûné* laid out—and Marie

really looks quite lovely in her white silk dress and orange flowers!"

"You must excuse my doubting your last assertion, Crescenz," observed her father, smiling. "Mademoiselle de Hoffmann is a most amiable, excellent person, but as to looking quite lovely in any dress, the thing is impossible."

"This day week," said Major Stultz, pompously, "we shall see a bride who looks lovely in every dress!"

At this moment Hildegard entered the room; her paleness was still more apparent than the night before, and her drooping eyelids showed plainly that she had not slept. She wished Hamilton good morning without looking at him, and then turned to her father.

"My dear child," said the latter, taking her hand compassionately, "you seem really ill. Shall I send for Dr. Berger?"

"Oh, no!" she answered, "I—I—am only cold," and she walked shivering to the stove.

"It will soon be time to go downstairs," said Madame Rosenberg. "I think we had better dress ourselves for the occasion. This *hint*," she added, "is intended for the Major too—he seems to forget the present, in anticipation of the future."

Major Stultz laughed, bowed to Crescenz, who was not looking at him, and left the room with his future father-in-law.

The moment the door closed, Crescenz

bounded towards her sister. "Oh, Hildegarde, you have no idea how beautifully arranged everything is downstairs ! What a pity there are to be so few people ! It was very stupid of Oscar to prefer driving off into the country at this time of year, to having a gay dance in the evening. However, Marie is quite satisfied. Do you know, the old Countess Raimund was below, looking so red and apoplectic. She did not take the least notice of me, though I heard her ask who I was. I dare say her husband would not acknowledge us either ; but he was not there. They said he was to come with Oscar. Another carriage has just driven up to the door. Perhaps that may be Oscar. I wonder, will he be married in uniform ? No—these are some acquaintances of the Hoffmanns'—we don't know them."

As she continued at the window, her sister approached Hamilton. "Is not this a melancholy mummerly ?" she said, glancing at her bridal dress. "I feel as if I were under the influence of a frightful dream, forced to act against my inclination, and in momentary expectation of some dreadful catastrophe. Am I then really awake ?" she added, extending her cold hand to him.

"I hope at least I am not dreaming," he said, holding it firmly, and looking at her until a transient flush passed across her pale features.

"It will be impossible for me to appear sur-

prised when I hear what I already know but too well," she said.

"No one will observe you in such a moment, and I will endeavour to remain near you."

Here Madame Rosenberg summoned them, and they all descended the stairs together. There were about twenty persons assembled, to whom Madame de Hoffmann was talking in her usual loud, sharp manner, while she paid particular attention to a grand, stiff-looking, elderly woman, in whom Hamilton immediately recognised the mother of Raimund. Hildegarde and Crescenz went into the adjoining room, where the bride was loitering until the arrival of the bridegroom. Hamilton walked to the window, and awaited in anxious silence the expected scene; a minute after, Count Raimund's carriage drove to the door. Without waiting to see who descended from it, Madame de Hoffmann conducted her daughter into the drawing-room, and while occupied in receiving the congratulations of her assembled friends, the poor girl did not perceive that her mother had been somewhat mysteriously called out of the room; soon after the Countess Raimund was summoned, and she returned no more; Hamilton saw her assisted into her carriage, and driven off. Then a couple of elderly gentlemen and Mr. Rosenberg were sent for; the latter alone returned, deprived of his usual serenity, and evidently at a loss what to say. He approached Mademoiselle de Hoffmann, looked

round the room, and then said : " I am sorry to be the bearer of unpleasant tidings—but—Count Raimund has become so suddenly and alarmingly ill, that his mother has been obliged to return home—and—the marriage—cannot possibly take place—to-day."

" Ill ! " exclaimed Marie, growing very pale. " Where is my mother ? "

She entered at the moment, and Hamilton saw from her extreme agitation that she knew all. She spoke hurriedly and confusedly with her guests, unconsciously showing her impatience to get rid of them. The Rosenbergs were the last, and were about to retire, when Marie laid her hand on Hildegarde's arm, and begged her to remain with her.

" Mademoiselle Hildegarde will not be able to offer you much consolation, Marie," said her mother, bitterly ; " there is little or no chance of Count Raimund's recovery."

" While there is life there is hope," said the poor girl, bursting into tears. " I suppose he has got the cholera, but many people have recovered from it, and why should not he ? "

Madame Rosenberg left the room, followed by her husband, Crescenz, and Hamilton.

About an hour afterwards, Hildegarde returned home, and changed her dress. She found her father, mother, and Major Stultz talking eagerly in the drawing-room ; the moment she appeared, her father exclaimed, " See there is

Hildegarde already in mourning ! I am sure a natural feeling of propriety induced her to put on a black dress."

"A natural feeling of pride," cried Madame Rosenberg ; "she wishes people to know that a Count Raimund was her cousin ; her aunt, however, the Countess, examined her superciliously enough through her *lorgnette* to-day, without in the least appearing to remember the relationship."

"What is the matter ?" said Hildegarde, appealing to her father.

"The matter !" cried Madame Rosenberg. "Your father most absurdly wishes you and your sister to put on mourning for your worthless cousin, and proposes Crescenz's marriage being deferred until after Easter. Heaven knows in these cholera times, where we may all be in six or seven weeks."

"Babette !" said her husband reproachfully, "this is going too far."

"Well, I did not quite mean to say so much, but I am against any further delays ; let the girls wear mourning if you wish it, and I promise to arrange the wedding so quietly that no one will know anything about the matter."

"This is a reasonable proposal," said Major Stultz. "Crescenz can put on her mourning after her marriage, and wear it for six months, if you wish it."

"A few weeks, for decency's sake," said Mr.

Rosenberg, "I certainly do desire. Count Oscar at least acknowledged the relationship, and his parents' neglect cannot alter the position of my daughters, or prevent them from mourning the unhappy end of their mother's nephew."

In the meantime Hamilton had approached Hildegarde, and asked her how her friend had borne the intelligence.

"We did not venture to tell her. She still thinks and talks of cholera ; but," she added, in a low voice, "imagine Madame de Hoffmann taking me aside, and in the most abrupt and unfeeling manner informing me of the real facts, fixing her small inquisitive eyes on my face the whole time. She little knew how well prepared I was for her intelligence !"

"What did you say ?"

"Very little. That it was a melancholy affair altogether. That Oscar had possessed some good and many brilliant qualities, but that, had he lived, I feared he was not calculated to have made Marie happy."

"Did she agree with you ?"

"More than I wished. She said, that after the first month she had endeavoured to draw back, but that the Raimunds had not allowed her. She had long perceived that Oscar did not care for her daughter, and had suspected that I was the object of his love, and that I returned it too, but she said she was now convinced of her error, and begged my pardon for her unjust suspicion."

"And you?"

"I pardoned her without difficulty, as you may suppose. Indeed, Oscar's conduct must have alarmed and irritated any reasonable mother. Marie's blindness has been incomprehensible to me."

"You forget that love is blind."

"Yes, to faults, but not to flagrant neglect."

"To weaknesses, faults, ill-usage, to everything," said Hamilton.

"I suppose it is so," said Hildegarde, thoughtfully. "Marie certainly was blind to all his errors, and will probably ever remain so. I was dazzled myself at first, as you may remember."

"Perfectly," said Hamilton, dryly.

"I know I have a sad habit of taking likings and disliking," she continued, listlessly.

"Yes, and on such occasions you are not exactly blind; you can even mistake faults for perfections."

"I am afraid that it is true," said Hildegarde, leaning back in her chair, with half-closed eyes, and speaking very slowly. "I remember for some time thinking Madame de Hoffmann agreeable and entertaining; her severe remarks I mistook for wit, until they were directed against myself."

"And what an antipathy you took to me at first sight!" observed Hamilton.

"You have no idea how she disliked you," cried Crescenz, who had, unperceived, ap-

proached them. They both started, and then blushed, as she continued, "if you had only heard her in Berchtesgarden railing at the cold, proud Englishman."

"Crescenz," said Hildegarde, with evident effort, "don't let us talk of that now; I cannot defend myself against you both to-day, I am too tired."

"Perhaps you begin to think differently of him," said Crescenz, archly; "Lina Berger may after all be right. When we were waiting for you last night at her house, she said she thought your hatred might in the end turn into——"

"Oh, Crescenz," gasped Hildegarde, in so unnatural a tone that her father called out, "Why, what's the matter there?"

"Hildegarde is getting into a passion," said Madame Rosenberg. "Do you not see how she is changing color?"

And changing color she was, with frightful rapidity; no one but Hamilton knew that she had been twenty-four hours without eating, for in the hurry of preparing for the wedding, her not breakfasting had passed unobserved. None but he knew the shock which her nerves had received the night before, the constraint under which she had been labouring; he alone understood that Crescenz's last remark was the drop which made the cup of bitterness to overflow, and yet he was quite as much shocked as the others when, stretching out her arm, and vainly

grasping the air for support, she fell senseless on the floor.

"Crescenz, what have you said to your sister?" cried her father, rushing forward.

"I don't know—I don't remember. What did I say?" she cried, appealing with a look of alarm to Hamilton.

Mr. Rosenberg raised Hildegarde, who, however, gave no sign of returning life; he was so alarmed and trembled so violently, that Hamilton was obliged to assist him to lay her on the sofa, while Crescenz opened the window, and Madame Rosenberg went for water. Their united efforts at length brought her to consciousness; she opened her eyes, perceived her father's terror as he hung over her, and while assuring him that she was quite well again, relapsed into a state of insensibility, which lasted until she had been removed to her room, and placed on her bed.

Doctor Berger was sent for. He hoped her illness might prove of no consequence, but she must be kept very quiet; there were symptoms which might lead to typhus or brain fever. Crescenz repeated this opinion to her sister, who, on hearing it, immediately desired to see Hamilton.

"But not now—not here," said Crescenz.

"No, I believe I must write a few lines, and you can give my note to him as he passes on his way to his room."

Crescenz brought a pencil and paper, and Hildegarde wrote in English :

"You have heard the Doctor's opinion of my illness ; I think, myself, it will only prove a severe cold. Should it, however, end in fever, and should I become *delirious*, you must go to Mademoiselle Hortense, one of the governesses in our school, tell her my situation, and say I request her to come and take charge of me. My step-mother will be satisfied with the arrangement, and you have no refusal to fear ; my motives you will easily guess."

"May I read it?" asked Crescenz as she received the paper from her sister—"ah ! it is English ; how fond you are of everything English."

"It is a commission to Mademoiselle Hortense ; you may see her name," said Hildegarde. "Mr. Hamilton can more easily go to her than you can."

"Oh, if that be all, I am glad you have chosen him, for you know I am horribly afraid of her."

"I know," said Hildegarde, pressing her hand on her forehead, and turning away.

The next two days were passed over in uncertainty, and Hamilton wandered about disconsolately enough ; but on the third, Hildegarde appeared to relieve his mind ; and so great was her father's joy at her recovery, that he actually spent the whole evening at home, without even requiring a rubber of whist.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE WEDDING AU TROISIÈME.

SEVERAL days passed over. Count Raimund's death had been much discussed among his acquaintance, who almost unanimously agreed in thinking he had committed the rash act to avoid a connection so much beneath him. He was more regretted than he deserved ; his various talents having made him unusually popular, and, in the society in which he had moved, people were not generally in the habit of studying character, or seeking motives of action. His circle was, however, so completely unknown to the Rosenbergs ; they were so totally without any sort of communication with any member of it, now that Count Zedwitz had ceased to frequent their house, that they heard none of the remarks—not one of the particulars. It spared Hildegarde much anxiety, for his wounded hand, the blood-stained dagger, and open door, had caused many inquiries ; and had it not been for a letter which he had written to his father (in the vain endeavour to exculpate himself), might have led to suspicions of murder.

The Rosenbergs heard nothing, and the preparations for Crescenz's marriage began ; they were conducted with ostentatious secrecy to please Mr. Rosenberg, who had consented to its taking place sooner than had been expected, as the Hoff-

manns had left the house, and removed altogether to Augsburg. Madame Berger had promised to play waltzes if the company should prove numerous enough to enable them to dance, and Madame Lustig had spent two or three afternoons cooking for the supper. On the wedding-day, Hamilton was not a little surprised to find Crescenz sitting composedly at breakfast in her gingham morning-wrapper, while her father left the room to go to his office as usual.

"I believe I have dressed too early," he said, glancing at his studied toilet; "may I ask at what hour——"

"At five in the afternoon," answered Hildgarde. "Mamma has determined to keep her promise, and has desired our friends to meet us at the Frauen Church. On our return it will be almost dark, and no one will know that we have a wedding in the house."

"But we shall dance," cried Crescenz, "and Major Stultz said I might waltz as often as I pleased with you this evening!"

"How very kind!" said Hamilton, smiling; "and how often do you intend to make use of the permission?"

"That depends upon you, I should think," she answered, blushing.

"You had better not trust to my discretion. I shall be tempted to make up for lost time, and dance with you the whole evening. You have put no sugar in my coffee," turning with a look

of mock distress to Hildegarde. "Did you forget it on purpose to punish me for being so late?"

"No. I—I was thinking of something."

"And that something?"

"Is not of much importance. I was thinking that, had you made that speech to Crescenz a few months ago, I should have been angry, for I should have imagined you were amusing yourself at her expense—whereas I now know that you mean nothing, but that you will dance with her two or three times this evening."

"And," said Hamilton, warmly, "and that I like to dance with her, and am obliged to her for wishing to dance with me. I mean that, too."

"I knew you did," cried Crescenz, triumphantly. "I am sure I always understood you better than Hildegarde, notwithstanding all her cleverness; but from the time that Count Zedwitz told her that you were already quite a man of the world, a—a—what was the word, Hildegarde?"

"I don't remember the word," she answered, calmly.

"It meant, I remember," said Crescenz, "a person who was too cold and calculating for his years—who was too worldly to have much feeling."

"That was unjust—that was saying too much," cried Hamilton, colouring.

"So Hildegarde thought also, but she has always insisted that you are proud and calculat-

ing, and that you seek to amuse yourself with other people's feelings and weaknesses."

"Is this your opinion of me?" said Hamilton, turning to Hildegarde.

"It was," she replied, steadily.

"Oh, Hildegarde is not afraid to say what she thinks; her opinion of you must have greatly changed, if it be what you would like to hear."

Hildegarde moved behind her sister to hide the intense blush which now spread over her features, and, placing her hand on her shoulder, perhaps to prevent her from turning round, she said, in a low voice, and with an embarrassed manner, "Crescenz, you have no idea, I am sure, how you are paining me at this moment. You are forcing me to confess, that I have not in this instance acted towards you with my usual candour. I have the very highest opinion of Mr. Hamilton."

"Well, to be sure!" exclaimed Crescenz, while she endeavoured to catch a glimpse of her sister's face, but Hildegarde moved still further back, and continued: "That I disliked him at first is most true, more on your account, however, than on mine; for his open hostility to me was excusable—his covert attentions to you unpardonable."

"But," said Crescenz, who seemed altogether to have forgotten Hamilton's presence; "but when did you begin to think differently of him?"

"From the time that he has ceased to be the subject of altercation between us," answered

Hildegarde, bending over her sister, and kissing her forehead.

“But, Hildegarde,” cried Crescenz, turning round with unexpected energy, “before we went to the ball, do you remember, when I told you that Lina Berger had said that Mr. Hamilton might still be my *scha*——”

Hildegarde’s two hands closed over her mouth, and the word was stifled in utterance. “Good gracious ! I quite forgot he was still here,” she cried, making a slight effort to laugh, and then running out of the room.

A long pause ensued. Hildegarde began to arrange the cups and saucers on a tray, until Hamilton, without looking up, asked her if she could remember the very time when her opinion of him had changed.

“Perfectly ; it was the night of Crescenz’s quarrel with Major Stultz. Your explanations by moonlight in our room were upright and honourable.”

“And you forgave my having flirted with her at Seon ?”

“Yes ; and I forgive your having tried to do the same with me here.”

“The case is totally different,” began Hamilton.

“There is some difference, I allow,” said Hildegarde ; “you warned me so well, that it would have been inexcusable my not understanding you—besides, I had the advantage of hearing from Count Zedwitz, that you considered your-

self at liberty to act as you pleased after having so fairly warned me."

"Zedwitz's love for you made him forget his friendship for me altogether," said Hamilton, with some irritation.

"I do not blame your conduct to me," said Hildegarde; "you wanted to improve yourself in German, and found quarrelling or flirting with me the most exciting method. I have profited by your society also, for I have not only learned to pronounce English, but," she added, with an arch smile, "I begin to understand something of the art of flirting, too, of which, I do assure you, I knew nothing when our acquaintance began."

"Oh, do not say that," cried Hamilton; "you are only joking, I am sure, for you have no inclination that way, but your sister Crescenz—"

"My sister Crescenz knew nothing of your propensities that way at Seon, and, therefore, I blame your conduct towards her. Your love, if you ever felt any, was pardonable; people cannot help that, I believe—but your endeavours to make her dislike Major Stultz were quite unpardonable."

"I acknowledge it," said Hamilton, gravely, "and regret it."

"That fault you were able in a measure to repair," continued Hildegarde, "but, perhaps, you are not aware that you have been the cause of frequent altercations between me and my sis-

ter—and that almost total estrangement has taken place between us in consequence.”

“And is that my fault, too?” asked Hamilton.

“I don’t know,” she replied, sorrowfully. “Before we became acquainted with you, we never had the most trifling difference of opinion—and now we never think alike, and all confidence is at an end!”

“You take the matter too seriously,” said Hamilton; “I am convinced your sister is not aware of your estrangement.”

“I am afraid you are mistaken—” began Hildegarde, but at this moment Crescenz entered the room; she was dressed to go out, and asked her sister to accompany her.

“Let us be off,” said Hildegarde, “we have no time to lose.”

“May I go with you,” asked Hamilton.

“N—o, I rather think not,” replied Hildegarde.

“But he may come for us in an hour or so,” said Crescenz, nodding to him with a smile.

“Tell me where I shall find you.”

Crescenz coloured and hesitated. “In—in my—in the—in Major Stultz’s apartments.”

“We are going to arrange the furniture,” said Hildegarde, closing the door.

The hour had scarcely half elapsed, when Hamilton found himself again with the two sisters; he was without ceremony desired to make

himself useful, and immediately employed in assisting to arrange a press which was to be filled with linen — afterwards the chairs and tables were moved about in all directions, the *étagère* admired, and finally they adjourned to the kitchen, where Crescenz, with amusing exultation, exhibited, one by one, her culinary utensils to Hamilton, explaining their uses, and assuring him that though her mother intended to give her Walburg as servant, she was determined to cook everything herself. While she was yet speaking, old Hans came to say she was expected home—they were to dine earlier than usual, and the hair-dresser was expected before two o'clock. She became very pale, and after having dismissed him, sat down on a little wooden stool, and began to cry. Hildegarde silently made a sign to Hamilton to leave them, and greatly wondering at the sudden change, he walked back to the drawing-room.

On glancing round at the furniture which Crescenz considered so splendid, he could not help smiling at the frugality of her taste. Was he to be envied for his more lavish ideas? Assuredly not. Everything in this world, from the diamond to the first thing beyond the absolute necessities of life, is valued fictitiously. The actual worth depends on the mind of the possessor, and is regulated in civilised countries by unconsciously made comparisons—the mental effort losing itself in the result. To Crescenz the thin white muslin curtains were quite as

desirable, even on a cold day in February, as to Hamilton the richest silk—the yellow sofa, with its hard-stuffed cushions and perpendicular sides, was intended to be a seat of honour for a guest, and was not adapted for reclining—even Hamilton must have failed in discovering a posture of repose upon it, and he had a most decided talent for making himself comfortable. The six chairs had long thin legs, but the wood which had been spared on the legs had been conscientiously bestowed on the backs, which were tastefully formed to represent hearts. A table, two chests of drawers, and the *étagère* completed the furniture of the room. As Hamilton stood before the latter, trying to admire the cups, saucers, glasses, and bronze candlesticks arranged upon it, and reflected in the looking-glasses which for that purpose formed the back, Hildegarde and her sister entered ; Crescenz, with the traces of recent tears on her face, nevertheless looked complacently around her, for the twentieth time arranged the folds of the curtains, dusted the table with her handkerchief, and then led the way down-stairs.

At five o'clock, a party of about sixteen or eighteen persons assembled in the private chapel of the Frauen Church to witness the marriage of Major Stultz and Crescenz Rosenberg. The bride shed no tears, she looked very pretty and very shy—the bridegroom rather stouter and redder than usual. Madame Rosenberg openly

expressed her satisfaction, and hoped the day was not far distant when she should be in the same place, and for the same purpose, on Hildegarde's account. Hildegarde was pale and silent, and Mr. Rosenberg alone showed that he was endeavouring to control his emotion.

On their return home, they found the rooms lighted, and supper prepared under the superintendence of Madame Lustig. They spent three hours at table, and then they danced, and then they ate, and then they danced again until past midnight, when, to conclude the festivity, punch was made. Let it not be supposed that this was, as in England, a simple mixture of water, sugar, and Cognac, or rum. In Germany, it is a complicated business, and notwithstanding the previous preparations of Madame Lustig, Madame Rosenberg, and three or four matrons accompanied her to the kitchen to assist in the brewing. Each had a different receipt—and a separation of the parties became absolutely necessary, as one proposed using black, another green tea, for the mixture, while the others were for rice-water or wine. Hamilton, who had become a sort of authority in the house on all subjects, was consulted, but on his venturing to suggest pure water, Madame Rosenberg, laughingly pushed him towards the drawing-room, saying, it was evident he knew nothing about the matter—he might dance until the punch was ready !

Most excellent it proved to be, however con-

cocted, when at length Madame Rosenberg appeared with a soup-tureen full, and dispensed it ladlewise to the surrounding company, who then crowded round Major Stultz and Crescenz, in order to clink their glasses, and partake of a colossal sponge-cake, which the latter distributed in ample portions.

A short time afterwards, old Hans announced, "The carriage for Miss Crescenz," and she retired with evident reluctance to put on her shawl. The whole company prepared to leave at the same time, and were soon altogether in the corridor. Crescenz embraced her step-mother, and somewhat formally thanked her for her kindness and generosity. She held out her hand to Hamilton, and then threw herself into her sister's arms, and burst into tears. "Come, come, Crescenz," cried her father, with an attempt at gayety he was far from feeling, "this will never do—you are taking leave as if seas and not streets were to separate us. Come," and he drew her arm within his, and led her down-stairs. The others followed, all but Hildegarde, and after a moment's hesitation, Hamilton. They returned to the deserted drawing-room, where Hildegarde threw open the window and leaned out.

They soon heard Crescenz's voice saying cheerfully, "Good-night, Lina—good-night, papa—good-night, Hildegarde."

"Good-night," answered her sister from the window, and the carriage drove off.

"Well, have we not spent a merry evening!" cried Madame Rosenberg, triumphantly, as she almost breathlessly entered the room a few minutes afterwards. "This has been a gay wedding after all, you see, Franz."

"It has," he answered, sinking dejectedly on the sofa; "I am quite provoked with myself for feeling so low-spirited. I believe I am not well."

"Ah, bah," cried his wife, laughing, "if you had been ill, you could not have supped as you have done. Perhaps, however, you have eaten too much fish, or turkey, or ham? At all events, I am sure you are tired and sleepy, so you may go to bed, while we put everything in order again."

Mr. Rosenberg, as usual, followed his wife's advice without contradiction. He held Hamilton's hand for a moment, as if he intended to say something more than the good-night which was scarcely audible.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A CHANGE.

HAMILTON was wakened about three o'clock in the morning by Hildegard rushing into his room, and exclaiming, "For heaven's sake, get up—get up, and come to my father—I am

afraid he has got the cholera. You have seen people ill, and know the symptoms. Oh, come—we do not know what to do!”

“Send for the Doctor,” cried Hamilton. “I shall be with you in a moment.”

On entering Mr. Rosenberg’s room, Hamilton found Hildegard standing beside his bed, while Madame Rosenberg was walking up and down the room, gesticulating like a person in a state of mental derangement.

“Oh, Mr. Hamilton,” she exclaimed, the moment she perceived him, “tell me, only tell me that Franz has not got the cholera, and I shall be grateful as long as I live! It would be too hard were he to have it now, when people say there is nothing more to fear. Last week, only one man—quite a decrepit old man, died of it? I am sure Franz has only eaten too much supper yesterday evening. Don’t you think so? Say that he has not got the cholera, and I shall believe you implicitly.”

But Hamilton could not say so, nor unfortunately Dr. Berger either; the case was at once pronounced a bad one, and, in a fearfully short time, quite hopeless. Consternation and dismay pervaded the whole household, when, on the morning of the third day, poor Mr. Rosenberg was no more. Completely overpowered by the suddenness of her own bereavement, Madame Rosenberg retired to her room, unable to speak to anyone.

Major Stultz immediately undertook the necessary arrangements for the funeral, and gave directions for the printing of circular letters to announce the death to distant relations and friends, a custom which saves the mourning family the performance of a most painful duty. Hamilton took the two little boys to their sister Crescenz. Her married life had begun in anxiety and sorrow, and Hamilton felt some natural trepidation at seeing her again, under such painful circumstances ; but her grief was of the most tranquil description, the tears flowed unrestrained over her round rosy cheeks, and when they ceased left not a trace behind. Although but a few days had elapsed since she had left her family, a not quite willing bride, she had already begun to repeat her husband's words as oracles. Hamilton half smiled as he heard her : "Thank goodness, that she at least was provided for, and had a home ! She hoped poor dear Hildegarde would not now begin to repent having refused such a man as Major Stultz, the more so, as that refusal precluded the possibility of her ever residing with them !"

Poor Hildegarde ! She had not bestowed one thought, much less a regret, on Major Stultz. Hamilton, on his return, found her sitting in her room, perfectly motionless, with parched lips, and eyes devoid of tears. He hoped she had at length begun to think of herself—recommended her to try to eat something, and go to bed.

She looked at him as if his words had not conveyed the slightest sense to her mind—walked uneasily up and down the room for a few minutes, and then said, with a shudder, “I am so afraid of his being buried alive! Do you think he was quite—quite dead? If I could only see him once more.”

“And who could be so cruel as to prevent you?” exclaimed Hamilton. “If it be any relief to your mind, I will remain in his room to-night?”

“In his room!” she cried, clasping her hands convulsively: he is no longer there—they have taken him away to the deadhouse.”

“The deadhouse! Where is that?”

“In the burying-ground. They have watches there, I believe, but still he is among all the frightful corpses, and should he come to himself—imagine how horrible! You will go with me—you will let me see him once more? I cannot else believe that he is really dead!”

“I will go with you there, or anywhere you please,” said Hamilton, completely overcome by her evident wretchedness.

The weather was unusually inclement; a storm of falling sleet almost blinded them as they waded through the half-melted snow which lay on the road outside the town; but Hildegarde seemed unconscious of all these impediments, hurried on silently until she reached the churchyard, where she turned to a building, which had escaped Hamilton’s observation on a former

occasion, and walked directly up to a row of glass doors, and stood as if transfixed with horror. Hamilton was in a moment at her side, and it must be confessed that to those who were not inured to the various aspects of death, the scene which presented itself was shocking in the extreme. On tables in the interior a long row of open coffins were arranged, their ghastly tenants dressed with a care that seemed to mock the solemnity of death and interment. A young officer was in uniform, as if about to appear on parade—an elderly gentleman dressed for a ball—a young girl whose half-open mouth and eyes showed the struggle with which soul and body had parted, was crowned with flowers, and a long white veil lay in white folds over her bare arms and white dress, reaching almost to the satin shoes which covered the stiff, cold feet as they protruded beyond the coffin in hideous rigidity.

Mr. Rosenberg was now scarcely recognisable ; his livid features were contracted, and not a trace remained of that beauty for which he had been so remarkable. Hamilton turned away, but again his eyes encountered death. Another and lighter room was filled with the corpses of poorer persons and children ; the latter indeed seemed to sleep, and on them the wreaths of flowers did not appear misplaced.

Hildegard seemed unable to tear herself from the spot, nor did Hamilton feel disposed to disturb her until he perceived a number of persons

hurrying to and fro, and torches glimmering in the churchyard ; he then asked a woman, who appeared with a bunch of keys in her hand, if there was to be a funeral.

“ I believe the Countess Raimund is to be buried this evening,” she answered.

“ Not one of these ? ” cried Hamilton, pointing to the place where Hildegarde stood.

“ Yes ; just there beside the gentleman who died of cholera—that old lady in black satin with her mouth wide open—it was shameful negligence of those about her not to close it before the jaw stiffened.”

“ Hildegarde,” said Hamilton, drawing her arm within his, “ you must now leave this place. There is to be a funeral.”

“ I know—I heard,” she said, allowing herself to be led away, with her head still turned towards the chamber of death. “ The only precedence which the Countess Raimund can now claim of my father,” she added, bitterly, “ is that of first descending into the grave ! How absurd all pride appears when standing at the threshold of a charnel-house ! ”

“ Very true,” said Hamilton, “ but how seldom the proud—how seldom anyone thinks of such a place. Where are you going now ? ”

“ To my mother’s grave.”

He made no opposition, for he hoped that some sudden recollection would put an end to the unnatural calmness of her manner, and was,

for this reason, not sorry to perceive that the grave-digger had already been at work ; the place was measured, and some shovelfuls of earth had been thrown over the grave she came to visit.

She seemed for a few minutes to pray, and then sat down beside the stone cross, and began assiduously to arrange the leaves of the still green, though withered, ivy wreaths which she had placed on it in November.

"I am trying your patience unpardonably," she observed at length, rising from her cheerless occupation, "and it is all to no purpose."

"What do you mean ?" asked Hamilton.

"I expected to feel something like sorrow for my father's loss. You will be shocked when I tell you that I cannot feel anything resembling it. Before I came here I thought my odious apathy was caused by doubts of the reality of his death—those doubts are all removed—I know that he is dead ; that in a few hours he will be in the grave, and moulder beside my mother's skeleton, and I do not, cannot feel anything like grief !"

"You are too much stunned by the suddenness," began Hamilton.

"Not so," said Hildegarde, quietly, "I assure you I never felt more perfectly contented than at this moment ; were it not that I shudder at my total want of sensibility."

"If it be insensibility," said Hamilton ; "but you have so much decision, so much firmness of character, that——"

"No, no," she cried, hastily interrupting him ; "this is not firmness. Do not imagine that I feel emotion which I am endeavouring to conceal, or suppressing tears ready to flow ; I only feel an almost irresistible inclination to walk or run without stopping ! "

"I am surprised that you do not find yourself completely exhausted," said Hamilton. "It would certainly be more natural, when one takes into consideration that you have not slept for three nights, or eaten anything for nearly three days ! "

"And you also have passed three sleepless nights," said Hildegard, "and without the hopes and fears which made the want of rest imperceptible to me. I ought to have remembered that sooner."

"I was not thinking of myself," cried Hamilton. "And your hopes and fears," he added, in a lower voice, "I have most truly participated. Will you never believe that your joys are my joys, your sorrows my sorrows ? "

He waited in vain for an answer ; Hildegard leaned heavily on his arm, and breathed quickly ; he at length caught a glimpse of her face, and was so shocked at the convulsive workings of her features that he beckoned to one of the numerous hackney coachmen returning from the churchyard, and silently placed his unresisting companion in the carriage. She sighed so deeply, and then gasped so fearfully for breath, that he let down

all the windows, and experienced the most heart-felt pleasure when at length she burst into a passion of tears.

She wept unrestrainedly until they reached home, but, even on the stairs as they ascended, Hamilton perceived a return of her former unnaturally composed manner.

During the next day Madame Rosenberg was almost constantly surrounded by her friends and acquaintance. Towards evening Crescenz drew her sister aside, and whispered : " Oh, my dear Hildegarde, this is an irreparable loss for you ! "

" Irreparable indeed ! " said Hildegarde, moving her head dejectedly ; " I wish it had pleased God to let me die instead of my father—few would have mourned for me ! "

" I 'm sure, dear, I don't know what is to become of you now ! I can't bear to think of it, but I suppose you will have to apply to Mademoiselle Hortense to get you a situation as governess ; you know she promised to do so whenever you wished it——"

" I know," said Hildegarde, rubbing her forehead with her hand, and biting her under lip with an expression of great distress. " Let us talk about that some other time—I cannot *think* yet."

" It was Lina Berger who talked about it ; she said she was sure that mamma would not propose your remaining with her, and Major Stultz says that——"

"Crescenz," said Hildegarde with some impatience, "say what you please to me from yourself, I am ready to hear you ; but do not torture me now with the opinions of either Lina Berger or Major Stultz."

"Well, to be sure ! And how often have you said that you considered him a sensible man !"

"I have not changed my opinion, but as I know he can feel no sort of interest in anything that concerns me, I do not wish to hear what he has said."

"Ah, I see Mr. Hamilton has been telling you—he smiled so strangely when I was speaking to him yesterday, that I was sure he would tell you everything—but indeed I wished to have had you with me directly ; it was my first thought, but Blazius said that what occurred at—at Seon—you know, made it quite impossible !"

"Mr. Hamilton told me nothing of all this," said Hildegarde. "I thank you for your kind intentions, dear Crescenz ; I can imagine that Major Stultz's refusal to comply with your wishes has pained you ; but you may set your mind at rest, for I feel even more intensely than he can, the impossibility of my ever becoming an inmate of his house."

"Well," said Crescenz, apparently greatly relieved ; "I'm sure I am glad to hear you say so, for though he talked very sensibly, and all that, this morning, I could not help crying, and was

quite uncomfortable at the idea of speaking to you about it ; I was afraid you might think that now I am married, I love you less."

"Four days is too short a time to work such a change, I hope," said Hildegarde, with a melancholy smile ; then suddenly seizing her sister's hands, she exclaimed, "Oh, Crescenz, love me ! Love me still—as much as you can—think how I shall miss my father's affection !"

"Very true, indeed, as Blazius says ; my father bestowed his whole affection on you, and quite overlooked me !"

Hildegarde gazed at her sister for a moment in silence, and then turned away with tearful eyes. She saw that Crescenz would soon be lost to her forever. Major Stultz already directed her thoughts and words, as completely as she herself had done when they were at school together. She watched her returning to their step-mother's room, and then walked slowly towards the door leading to the passage. Hamilton was standing at the stove—had heard the sister's conversation, and filled with compassion for her deserted position, he seized her hand as she passed, and passionately pressed it to his lips without speaking. When she raised her heavy eyelids to look at him, she saw that his eyes were suffused with tears.

"I—thank you—for your sympathy," she murmured with trembling lips, as she withdrew her hand, and hurried out of the room.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE ARRANGEMENT.

AFTER the interment of Mr. Rosenberg, some time passed over in melancholy monotony. Madame Rosenberg employed herself principally in the inspection and arrangement of papers; Hildegarde wandered about the house, endeavouring in an absent manner to make herself useful. She even tried to assist the new cook, but her efforts were so entirely unsuccessful, that her mother begged she would desist, as she had no sort of talent in that line.

Mr. Rosenberg had been a kind husband and an affectionate father; Hamilton had invariably found him an agreeable companion, but his constant occupation in his office, and an inveterate habit of going out every evening, had made his society an occurrence of such rarity, that Hamilton in a short time became quite resigned to his loss; in fact, but for the mourning dresses, Hildegarde's unconquerable dejection, and the never failing tears of Madame Rosenberg, as she circumstantially related to every visitor the history of her husband's illness and death, he would soon have forgotten that he had ever existed. He attended the college lectures, studied German with his friend Biedermann, rode, walked, in short, continued all his former occupations, with the exception of his quarrels with Hildegarde—

these had now entirely ceased ; he obeyed her slightest directions, anticipated her wishes with a sort of quiet devotion so completely directed to her alone, but so unobtrusive, that Madame Rosenberg failed to observe more than that they had learned to live peaceably in the same house together, and praised them both more than once for having ceased their silly and useless quarrels.

One day, about the beginning of April, Hildegarde recalled him just as he was about to leave the house, saying that her mother wished to speak to him ; he laughingly demanded if the probably not very important communication could not be deferred to another day, as he had promised to meet some friends at Tambosi's in the Hofgarten. Hildegarde gravely shook her head, and said she believed her mother was waiting for him.

"What a bore !" he exclaimed, striding along the passage ; "I suppose I shall be detained half an hour to hear a lecture about having forgotten to extinguish the candles last night, or having burned my boots on the stove ! I really wish, Hildegarde, you would give your new cook instructions about my room—it is not at all necessary that your mother should be informed every time an accident occurs there."

Madame Rosenberg was sitting at an old-fashioned scrutoire furnished with innumerable diminutive secret and apparent drawers ; she had a small packet of bills beside her, and various heaps of money before her. When Ham-

ilton entered, she immediately moved back her chair, and pointed to another beside her, which she wished him to occupy. Now that Hamilton had already become a little spoiled by Madame Rosenberg's indulgence, praises, and deference to his opinion, he had learned to like her and even overlook her vulgarity ; but in proportion as his affection had increased his respect had decreased, and like the spoiled son of a weak mother, he now stood leaning against the door, refusing with an impatient gesture the offered chair, and murmuring some unintelligible words about business and disappointments.

"I shall not detain you long," said Madame Rosenberg, drawing out of her pocket an enormous linen handkerchief, and wiping away two large tears, which were obtrusively rolling down her cheeks. "I ought to have spoken to you long ago, but I have been thinking over and over the means of rendering my communication less disagreeable."

"So," cried Hamilton, closing the door, and advancing towards her, "so it is not about the boots you are going to lecture me?"

"No," she replied, half laughing, "though I must say——"

"I know all you are going to say," cried Hamilton, laughing, "extravagant habits, horrible smell, danger of burning the house, and all that ! Suppose it said—I am very contrite indeed, and promise not to burn either shirt or boots for

three weeks to come, and not at all when the weather is warmer and the stove is not heated."

"In three weeks, and when the weather is warmer, we shall be too far apart for me either to lecture or detain you in my room against your will!"

"My dear Madame Rosenberg," exclaimed Hamilton, springing towards her, and not only seating himself on the previously disdained chair, but drawing it so close to hers that she involuntarily drew back; "my dear Madame Rosenberg, you surely do not mean that I must leave you?"

"I do, indeed," she answered, nodding her head slowly and despondingly, and again the monstrous handkerchief was put in requisition. "I'm sure," she added, somewhat surprised at the varying emotions depicted on his countenance, "I'm sure it's very kind of you to be so sorry to leave us—I thought the loss was wholly on our side."

"I have spent seven of the happiest months of my life in your house," began Hamilton.

"Six months and one week," said Madame Rosenberg, interrupting him; "you were three weeks at Havard's, you know, and when we are settling our account the three weeks must be deducted, for, as poor dear Franz said——"

"I should like to know your intentions with respect to Hildegarde," said Hamilton, who had not heard one word of the explanation.

"Hildegarde goes with me to the Iron Works,

as people now call them ; poor Franz was so uneasy about her on his death-bed, that I promised him she should never leave my house excepting with her own free will, and always have the power of returning to it when she chose, and that she should receive on her marriage a *trousseau* in every respect like her sister's."

"This promise must have been a great relief to his mind," observed Hamilton.

"It was," said Madame Rosenberg, and the tears flowed fast as she added : "I would have given him everything I had in the world to have made him contented in his last moments. We lived so happily together during the twelve years which we passed in this house. I cannot remain here any longer—the house—the furniture—Munich itself has become odious to me. I intend to return to my father. Fritz will be made a gentleman, as his father wished it, at the military school. Gustle must be his grandfather's successor at the Iron Works ; he has, at all events, no great love of learning ; and Peppy is too young to be taken into consideration at present."

"Take *me* with you to the Iron Works," said Hamilton, abruptly.

Madame Rosenberg looked at him as if she did not quite comprehend.

"Take me with you to the Iron Works," he repeated.

She shook her head. "It is no place for you,"

she said, steadily, "nor is my father, though an excellent man, a companion for you. Your parents would be dissatisfied, and with reason, were you to bury yourself in an insignificant village, just so many miles from Munich as to prevent your being able to avail yourself of the advantages which you told me you had found here for the completion of your education."

Hamilton felt the justness of her remark, and did not attempt to contradict it; he had, however, no intention of quitting a family of which Hildegarde was still to be a member; nor did he much concern himself about the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of his parents just at that moment. He understood Madame Rosenberg perfectly, and changed his tactics. Throwing himself back in his chair, he said, with apparent resignation: "Well, I suppose I must spend the ensuing five months at Havard's, that 's all!"

"At Havard's! What an idea!" exclaimed Madame Rosenberg; "to be giving suppers and drinking champagne every night! I never heard of anything so absurd!"

"Why, where else can I go? I cannot well take a lodging and engage a cook and housemaid for myself, can I?"

"No," replied Madame Rosenberg, half laughing, "not exactly that—but a lodging, or a family might be found. Suppose, for instance, that Madame Berger should have proposed taking you, in case the Doctor have no objection, eh?"

"I am sure I have none," said Hamilton, vainly endeavouring to suppress a smile as he added, "she is one of the prettiest little women I ever saw, and with time and opportunity I have no doubt I shall fall desperately in love with her. You will not be there to sustain me with your good advice—and—a—but at least you will be answerable for the consequences, as you will have led me into the temptation !"

"Good heavens ! Not for all the world would I take such a responsibility upon myself !" cried Madame Rosenberg, with a look of amazement ; "Lina, too, so giddy and thoughtless, and the Doctor never at home ! It would never do, I see. But who would have imagined that you would think of such a thing at your age !"

"I am just at the age to act more from impulse than reason, and I consider you too much my friend not to speak candidly to you. If Major Stultz were not so insufferably jealous, you could make me over to Crescenz—my regard for her is really of the most blameless description, and will never be otherwise."

"Oh, the Major would never listen to such a proposal."

"Then I have no alternative but Havard's—Havard's or your house," he continued, taking her large hard hand and pressing it fervently ; "dear Madame Rosenberg, let me go with you ; I have a sort of presentiment that it is the only means of keeping me out of mischief ; besides, I

can ride or drive into Munich two or three times a week."

"But I have no room for you," she cried, with a look of distress; for the earnestness of his manner had begun to move her.

"You must make room for me," urged Hamilton.

"And as to your horses and Hans——"

"Oh, I can easily find quarters for them in the neighbourhood."

"You will have to sleep in a room without a stove——"

"I don't want a stove in summer."

"Well then," she said hesitatingly, "If you think that you can be satisfied with the accommodation which I have at my disposal, you can accompany us to the country. Should our manner of living, or what I fear more, my father, not suit you, you can leave us, you know; we will part friends at all events."

"Don't talk or think of parting," cried Hamilton, gayly. "I am sure I shall find your father a most worthy person—we shall get on famously together. When do you leave? It will be quite delightful to breathe the country air. I assure you I feel already impatient to be off."

"On the 24th I purpose leaving Munich," said Madame Rosenberg, once more drawing her chair towards her scrutoire, and beginning to count her little heaps of money.

"Are those Iron Works romantically situated?" asked Hamilton.

"N—o. They are on the high road at the end of the village ; but there is a fine old oak wood quite close to us."

"Ah ! an oak wood," repeated Hamilton, thoughtfully.

"We have also a garden and orchard behind the house ; the smoke from the forge indeed spoils the flowers greatly, but there is an arbour under the trees where we can breakfast, and drink coffee after dinner, in summer—the arbour is quite covered with roses and honeysuckles."

"Ah, that is delightful !" cried Hamilton, in vision imagining himself sitting with Hildegarde in the rose and honeysuckle arbour.

"But you are forgetting your appointment," observed Madame Rosenberg, who had been in vain endeavouring to correct a fault in her reckoning.

"A civil way of telling me to leave you in peace," said Hamilton, laughing.

"Not at all, I assure you. If you have really no appointment, I shall be glad to talk over my plans with you."

"I *had* an appointment," he said, looking at his watch, "for which I am too late. I have another, for which I am a few minutes too early."

"A few minutes," repeated Madame Rosenberg. "That will never do for me. In your 'few minutes' I can only inform you that you must go for a few days at least to Havard's, until I have got everything in order. Hildegarde and

the children I intend to pack off the day after to-morrow."

"Oh, pack me off, too, with Hil——with the children," cried Hamilton, eagerly. "I wish you would consider me really as one of them."

"Well, I am sure I have always done so since you have been with me. Poor Franz often said I took great liberties with you."

"I cannot remember anything of the kind."

"Why, have you forgotten the Sunday Fritz broke the window in the drawing-room, when you were teaching him to box?"

"I remember you boxed his ears, poor fellow, which he certainly did not deserve, as he was not really the cause of the mischief. It was I who pushed him against the window, and, if I recollect right, both Mr. Rosenberg and I protested—"

"Yes, you protested, and that made me still more angry; but if you don't remember what I said to you, so much the better. Franz said he believed you never heard it, as you were laughing with Madame Berger, and I was afterwards very sorry for having said so much, especially about the rough English plays."

Hamilton smiled. "I suppose," he said turning towards the door, "Hans may pack up my chattels; you will send me to the country with the children."

"No, no, no;" cried Madame Rosenberg, hastily, "that will never do; I must write to my

father and explain. If he knew the sort of person you are—he would never consent to your becoming an inmate of his house !”

“Am I, then, so very disagreeable?” asked Hamilton.

“Quite the contrary—but you do not understand my father. In short, it is better to tell you at once—why should I be ashamed to say it? He was a common journeyman smith—so extremely industrious, of such enormous strength, and with so much talent for mechanics, that he made himself not only useful, but altogether indispensable to my grandfather, who, rather than lose him, gave him his daughter in marriage. Our forge became in time an iron work, and he is now the richest man far and wide. To see him, you would not suppose so ; he is neither changed in manner nor dress——” Madame Rosenberg paused.

“Well?” said Hamilton.

“Well!” she repeated, a little impatiently. “It is plain enough, I think, that such a man will not suit you—or you suit him.”

“I don’t know that,” said Hamilton. “A man who has turned a forge into an iron work, and who, from having nothing, has become rich by honest means, must be possessed of good sense and good talents, too. As to his appearance or dress—a man’s coat——”

“That ’s just what I am afraid of,” cried Madame Rosenberg.

“Do you think I attach much importance to a coat? I assure you that I am determined to like your father with and without a coat.”

“I will write him *that*, and it will at once put an end to our difficulties, for if I say *that* he will never imagine you are so fastidious——”

“I don’t quite understand——” said Hamilton, with a puzzled air.

“It would never do—you see—were we to inconvenience him,” said Madame Rosenberg, “or force him to change his mode of life. He likes to work and dine in his shirt-sleeves, and is not over particular how his meals are served—this I can change, perhaps, but against the shirt sleeves I can do nothing, and I know it is very vulgar; Franz told me so often enough.”

“I have no sort of objection to his shirt sleeves,” said Hamilton, “provided he allow me to wear a coat. What matter! If this be the reason why I should not go with Hildegarde and the children the day after to-morrow, I think you may waive all ceremony and tell your father that I belong to the family. You have made an agreement to keep me for six months longer.”

“This is a good idea,” said Madame Rosenberg, laughing. “I will write to him to-morrow, and I dare say I shall have an answer in a day or two.”

Hamilton perceived he had gained every concession he could reasonably demand, and left the room quietly and thoughtfully.

Hildegarde had prepared her brothers for their afternoon walk, and was waiting with some indications of impatience for his appearance. He had been forbidden to walk with her, but had established a sort of right to be informed where she intended to go—that he should ride near her, or at least become visible during her walk, was a sort of tacit agreement.

“The Nymphenburg road,” cried Gustle, springing towards him. “May I have one of your canes?”

“And may I, too, have one to ride upon?” asked Peppy.

“Yes,” said Hamilton, “Hildegarde will show you those you may take.”

“Oh, come, Hildegarde,” cried Gustle, pulling her rather roughly; “come and choose the canes for us. I must have the little black one with the horse’s head on it.”

But Hildegarde showed no inclination to move. “You were a long time in my mother’s room,” she said at length, with some embarrassment.

“Not longer than was necessary to make her consent to take me with her to the country. Oh, Hildegarde, what pleasant walks we shall have in the oak wood, and how much happier we shall be there than here! Were you ever at these Iron Works?”

“Not since I was a child,” answered Hildegarde, smiling as she had not smiled since her father’s death; “I remember the noise of the

hammers was incessant, and the house shook a good deal, and the white window-curtains were very soon soiled."

"We shall get used to the hammers, I dare say," said Hamilton, laughing. "As to the house shaking, that must be imagination; and the window-curtains can be easily changed, you know."

"But mamma said nothing in the world would induce her to take you with us. How did you persuade her?"

"I can tell you all that when I return home. Excuse me as well as you can, should I be late for supper. Good-by."

"Where are you going?" asked Hildegarde.

He whispered a few words, and then hurried down-stairs.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE DIFFICULTY REMOVED.

IT was late in the evening, and Hamilton had not yet returned. Madame Rosenberg began to get a little uneasy, and very impatient, when fortunately Madame Berger arrived to complain bitterly of her husband, who had declined receiving Mr. Hamilton as an inmate of his house on any terms. "He says I am too young—and he is too often absent—and people might talk! Did you ever hear anything so absurd?"

"I believe he is right," said Madame Rosenberg, "you are too young——"

"I wonder it never occurred to you that your step-daughters were still younger!" cried Madame Berger, glancing towards Hildegarde, who was sitting at the window looking into the street.

"The case is quite different," said Madame Rosenberg; "we are a large family, and where the father and mother are in a house——"

"Pshaw!" cried Madame Berger, impatiently; "Cressy liked him, for all that, better than she will ever like her husband, I suspect!"

"Who told you that?" cried Madame Rosenberg, with a look of amazement.

"My own eyes," replied Madame Berger, with a slight laugh; "and not Hildegarde," she added, in answer to a look of suspicion which Madame Rosenberg had cast on her step-daughter. "Believe me, neither the presence of father nor mother can prevent these things."

"Crescenz is most happily married," began Madame Rosenberg.

"So am I—but I preferred Theodor Biedermann to the Doctor, as you well know. You need not look so astonished at hearing me speak the truth, Hildegarde. I vow one would almost imagine you heard this for the first time! As if Cressy had not betrayed me long ago, not to mention Mademoiselle Hortense, who of course used me as a scarecrow for the whole school! Excepting, perhaps, the dear, good old Doctor,"

she continued, "there is not one of my acquaintances who does not know that I nearly cried my eyes out about Theodor."

"And is it possible you have not told Dr. Berger?" cried Hildegarde, turning quickly round. "Did you not feel bound in honour——"

"No, mademoiselle," replied Madame Berger, sharply; "I did not feel myself bound in honour deliberately to destroy my domestic peace—I leave it to you to make such a confession when you are going to be married, if you think it necessary!"

"I am afraid Hildegarde is not likely to be married at all, now that we are going to live at the Iron Works," sighed Madame Rosenberg. "The only neighbour we have is the *Förster*, and he——"

"Lord bless you!" cried Madame Berger, "Hildegarde would never look at a *Förster* if he were not by chance a count or baron. Had Mr. Hamilton only been a *Milor*, she would never have thought of quarrelling with him, I can tell you!"

"Caroline!—madame!" exclaimed Hildegarde, with a vehemence that made Madame Berger retreat a few steps from the window, while she cried, with affected fear, "Good heavens! I had no idea you could get into a passion about *him*! And here he is," she added, springing again to the window as she heard the sound of a horse's hoofs on the pavement; "here he is, and

I suspect there are few *Milors* to be compared to him ; he certainly is the handsomest creature I ever saw ! An ideal of an Englishman ! *Un amour !* ”

“ Lina ! ” said Madame Rosenberg, reproachfully, “ you must forgive my observing that this language is not proper for a young married woman. ”

“ Ah, bah ! as if I were serious ! Have you forgotten that you used to say I always spoke without thinking ? Now, Hildegarde there thinks without speaking, perhaps ! ”

“ Not of Mr. Hamilton, ” said Madame Rosenberg, “ for she did not even look out of the window at your *amour*, or whatever you call him. Hildegarde, go and tell him we have waited nearly two hours for him, that supper is ready, and that I beg he will come just as he is, and not make an evening toilet for once in a way. ”

She had not time to deliver her message, for Hamilton entered the room with unusual precipitation, and handed Madame Rosenberg an enormous, ill-folded, long-wafered letter.

“ From my father ! ” she exclaimed, with surprise.

“ Yes ; he has no sort of objection to my accompanying you to the Iron Works ; he says you may take me instead of Fritz. ”

“ A good idea, ” cried Madame Berger, as she came from behind the window-curtain ; “ it is, however, Mr. Hamilton’s, and not your father’s. ”

"It is in the letter, however," said Madame Rosenberg, eagerly perusing the inelegant specimen of penmanship ; "but I do not see any thing about Hans or the horses."

"Oh, I said nothing about them, they can go to the inn."

"But we have a stable——" began Madame Rosenberg.

"I know you have, and a pair of stout greys in it. Your father has promised me a lift into Munich every Saturday, when he sends in his iron."

"On the cart?" asked Madame Berger.

"Yes," said Hamilton, "there are places for two on the seat in front. The offer was very civil, considering the shortness of our acquaintance."

"It is a proof, at all events, that he has taken a great fancy to you," said Madame Rosenberg, with an air of great satisfaction ; "and as you wish to go with the children, Hildegarde must arrange your room for you. Do you hear, Hildegarde?"

"Yes, mamma."

"I must give you a green curtain to hang up before the alcove where the bedstead is to be put, and it will be nearly as good as two rooms. You must make new muslin curtains for the windows as soon as possible."

"Your grandfather made most particular inquiries about you," observed Hamilton, turning to Hildegarde.

"He is not my grandfather ; he is no relation whatever of mine," she answered in French,

while her colour heightened rapidly, and seemed to be reflected in Hamilton's face, which became crimson.

"I don't understand French," said Madame Rosenberg, looking at them alternately ; "but I think I can guess ; however, it is no matter—read this letter, Hildegarde ; in it you will find everything, and more than you could have heard from Mr. Hamilton. My father is willing to act towards you as a relation ; do not, by an ill-timed exhibition of pride, turn his kindly feelings towards you into dislike."

She received the letter and the not undeserved rebuke in silence ; while Hamilton, to divert Madame Berger's attention, began a description of his meeting with Mr. Eisenmann, of their discourse, and supper.

"It must have been delicious, the whole scene," cried Madame Berger ; "I shall pay you a visit at the Iron Works the very first day the Doctor can let me have the horses."

"Pray bring the Doctor with you when you come," said Madame Rosenberg, unconsciously glancing towards Hamilton.

Madame Berger saw the glance, observed that Hamilton laughed, and immediately inquired the cause. Madame Rosenberg refused to tell her, and she appealed to Hamilton, who immediately, with the most perfect composure, and without the slightest reserve, repeated all the part of their morning conversation which related to her. She seemed to enjoy the recital and Madame Rosen-

berg's face of horror equally. "One thing is certain," she said, when he had ended, "had you been so many months in the same house with me, as you have been with Hildegarde, we should have——"

"You seem altogether to forget the Doctor," said Madame Rosenberg, interrupting her, almost angrily.

"To tell the truth, I sometimes do forget that I am married ; but Mr. Hamilton understands *badinage* perfectly, so you need not look so shocked at my *bavardage*."

"I wish you would speak German," said Madame Rosenberg, fidgeting on her chair ; "you use so many French words, that I cannot understand the half of what you say."

"I believe I had better go home," cried Madame Berger, good-humouredly. "Allow me to hope you will be civiler to me when I visit you in the country ! *Bon soir*."

"Good-night," said Madame Rosenberg, dryly, without making the slightest effort to detain her.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE IRON WORKS.

IN a few days, Hildegarde, the children, and Hamilton were established at the Iron Works ; her recollections proved tolerably correct, the noise of the hammers was almost incessant, not

even ceasing during the night, and as the house adjoined the iron works, it shook at times until the windows rattled. Hamilton did not much notice the white curtains, but from pure sympathy with Hildegarde, he regretted the smuts which fell, flake-like, in the garden, and seemed destined to rob the coming flowers of half their beauty. Old Mr. Eisenmann was not a little proud of his garden, and great was his satisfaction when he found Hildegarde willing to assist him in cultivating it. The plants which most interested Hamilton were the numerous cactuses which filled all the windows in the front of the house, and whose brilliant flowers already made every passer-by stop to gaze at them. Nothing could equal the old man's delight on such occasions ; if the weather were warm enough, he generally opened the window and related how he had managed his plants during the winter, in order to make them blow so early, and it had been Hamilton's unaffected admiration of these cactuses, as he had walked up to the house, which had formed the commencement of their acquaintance.

During the fortnight which preceded Madame Rosenberg's arrival, Hamilton enjoyed the most unrestrained intercourse with Hildegarde ; he watched her making the coffee in the morning, sat beside her at the open window looking into the garden, and accompanied her in her walks with her brothers in the oak wood ; here there

was a small chapel in which she daily prayed, while Hamilton, leaning against the entrance, stared absently at the votive offerings hung around, or endeavoured to decipher the old German prayers, and texts of Scripture, with which their inhuman illustrations were pasted on the walls. The two boys generally scampered about, but joined them when they sat down on one of the numerous benches under the trees. Hamilton usually held a book in his hand, out of which he sometimes read a few lines, especially when any obtrusive wanderers made their appearance, though on week-days, pilgrims to the little chapel, who afterwards came to beg a few *kreutzers*, were the only interrupters of their studies, meditations, or conversation, as the case may have been.

"I wish," he said, as they loitered through the fields on their way home, the evening before Madame Rosenberg's arrival, "I wish I were certain of spending the next six months as I have done the last fortnight. I cannot tell you how I have enjoyed myself. Much as I like your step-mother, and notwithstanding all her kindness and indulgence to me, I dread her coming more than I can express. Everything will be changed, and any change must diminish my happiness."

"You have nothing to apprehend but a removal of the furniture in your room," replied Hildgarde, with a quiet smile ; "but I cannot expect

any longer to eat the bread of idleness ; I must learn to cook, and wash, and iron ? ”

“ You will never be able to endure such work,” exclaimed Hamilton.

“ I shall try it for a few months at all events, and as long as you are here,” she added, frankly, “ I think I can bear it, as your society and friendship will be an indemnity for most annoyances.”

Hamilton’s expressions of gratitude she interrupted by continuing, “ After all, what shall I do more than girls in my rank of life must always do ? Even Crescenz, since her marriage, has learned to iron. Did you not see her ironing Major Stultz’s shirts when we went to take leave of her ? ”

“ Yes, but he is her husband ; and it was a mere ostentation of usefulness on her part, for your mother told me she need not do anything of the kind if she did not wish it. Crescenz, however, does not appear misplaced when so employed, but you——”

“ Strictly speaking, I am not more misplaced than she is. We have both received an education beyond our station in the world. I have, perhaps, profited more by the instruction bestowed on me than she has ; but you must allow that *she* has shown infinitely more capacity for the necessary duties of life.”

“ If it be her duty to iron her husband’s shirts,” answered Hamilton, laughing, “ I must say she performs it in the most charming manner possible. Nothing could be more coquettish

than the black silk handkerchief twisted round her head to prevent her from feeling the draught of air, or the sleeves tucked up just enough to exhibit the dimples in her white arms ! I must say, Crescenz is perfectly aware of all her personal advantages ! ”

“ And who is not aware of them ? ” said Hildegarde, “ or rather who does not overrate them ? ”

“ You do not, most certainly ! ” cried Hamilton. “ I am convinced you do not think——”

“ That I am handsome ? ” said Hildegarde, interrupting him quietly ; “ I know it perfectly well. You are shocked at my candour,” she added, after a pause, on observing that he continued silent ; “ it would have been more proper to have disclaimed—but, after all, what worth have regular features, when they are inanimate ? And mine are so, I know.”

“ You are mistaken,” said Hamilton ; “ I have never known anyone whose features have expressed so many various emotions as yours have during the few months of our acquaintance.”

“ That I have felt more than during the whole of my previous life, is most certain,” she said, thoughtfully ; “ It seems, then, I have not been able to acquire that composure of mind and feature which Mademoiselle Hortense so often told me would be essentially necessary for my happiness.”

“ I am rather inclined to hate that Mademoiselle Hortense without ever having seen her,”

cried Hamilton ; " I think she wished to make an actress of you ! "

" No, she wished to make a good governess of me, as my step-mother desired her, and she saw that my pride and violence of temper would prove serious obstacles. My gratitude to her is unbounded for all her care and attention during so many years. She is my only hope for the future too—on her I depend to find me some respectable situation, should my residence here become uncomfortable."

" Have you ever seriously thought of taking such a step ? "

" I believe I have talked more than thought on the subject. One thing I have resolved upon, and that is, to go as far as possible from home."

" Should you like to go to a foreign country ? "

" Foreign, as you understand the word—no, but I am not likely to have the power of choosing. Mademoiselle Hortense's connections are all in Alsace, and my destination will probably be Strasburg."

They walked on in silence, each absorbed in thoughts of no very agreeable description. As they drew near the house, Mr. Eisenmann came to meet them, accompanied by the *Förster*, who had begun to drop in regularly every evening, to drink a glass of beer with the old man. Hamilton greatly approved of the arrangement, as it left him at liberty to talk unreservedly in English to Hildegarde, who, however, would have

preferred his absence, from the time that Hamilton had made her observe that his eyes were fixed upon her incessantly, and followed her wherever she went.

“This is the last evening you will be my house-keeper, Hildegarde,” said Mr. Eisenmann, as she pushed his arm-chair to the table, and placed his newspaper, which seemed to contain nothing but advertisements, beside the small brass lamp. “I can give you a good character, girl ; you have a way with you that has made the people here obey you at once. She will make a good wife one of these days—eh, Mr. Hamilton? Eh, *Förster Weidmann?*”

Hildegarde smiled, and continued to perform her different evening duties. She gave her brothers their bread-and-milk, assisted the awkward maid-servant to arrange the supper-table, made the salad, carved the fowl, and presented each his plate with such quiet unobtrusiveness, that her motions were only apparent by the rustling of the large bunch of keys she was to resign to her mother the next day, but which now hung glittering in steel chains at her girdle *à la châtelaine*.

Hamilton had been agreeably surprised at finding Mr. Eisenmann by no means so illiterate as he had expected. On every subject relating to his trade he was perfectly well informed, and in other respects his opinions were those of a shrewd, intelligent man. He spent the greater

part of each day at the Iron Works, his hands thrust into his pockets, a short and very brown meerschaum pipe between his teeth, and his eyes following the movements of his workmen ; and sometimes, when provoked by their want of skill, or too dilatory movements, after a few impatient ejaculations, throwing aside his coat and working with them. In his house, too, Hamilton had now frequently seen him in his shirt-sleeves, without feeling any of the horror expected by Madame Rosenberg ; in the evening he generally mounted a black silk nightcap, and when he had finished smoking his pipe and drinking his tankard of beer, and the *Förster* had taken leave, overcome by the fatigue of early rising and his daily exertions, he usually fell fast asleep, leaving his two companions to whisper, until the Scharwald clock struck nine, when wakening without any apparent effort, he sent them to bed, and retired for the night himself.

This evening—this last evening, as they chose to call it—the *Förster* showed no inclination to move, and his eyes now seemed to follow the motions of Hildegarde's lips, as she murmured an occasional sentence to Hamilton ; he tried in vain to join in their conversation, spoke of bringing his zither, proposed teaching them to play it, if they desired, and not finding either of them disposed to appreciate either his conversational or musical talents, he turned to the now drowsy old man, whom he contrived to waken com-

pletely by some reference to the eternal "good old times."

"Pray, Hildegarde, turn away from that man," said Hamilton, bending down to her, as she sat in one of the children's low chairs beside him; "as long as he can look at you he finds it impossible to tear himself away—it is absolute cruelty—he is depriving Mr. Eisenmann of his sleep this evening. Unpardonably inconsiderate!" he added, almost angrily.

Hildegarde, without an attempt at deprecation, lit a taper, and retiring to the other end of the room, where there was a thin-legged rickety table, she took from a cupboard the large house account-book, a hideous leaden ink-bottle, and a well-worn pen, and began to add and subtract with a diligence which would have put Hamilton's temper to the proof, had not the *Förster* almost directly stood up to take leave; but the old man was now quite roused, and, moreover, disposed to be loquacious; he let his visitor stand before him in the awkward posture of a shy man, wishing to get away, and not knowing how to manage it, while he observed: "When people say the old times were good, and the present times are bad, I always feel obliged to contradict them. No offence, good Mr. Weidmann, but in my youth I have often heard just the same thing said, and in those times as in these, the greater part of mankind had to earn their bread in 'the sweat of their face.'"

"I suppose so, sir," said the *Förster*, trying to move, but restrained by the old man's continuing to address him. "I wish you a good-night."

"All I know is," resumed Mr. Eisenmann, addressing Hamilton, "that Bavaria, of all the countries I have seen, appears to me to be the happiest. Of England I know nothing, excepting the manufacturing towns——"

"When were you there?" asked Hamilton.

"Soon after the peace—I went there on business."

"And what did you think of England? I should like to know what impression was made on you by our great manufacturing districts?"

"I saw much to admire, but nothing to make me think the English a *happier* people than the Bavarians," replied Mr. Eisenmann, with a low, satisfied laugh. "I would rather have been born a smith here than there, for, besides the instructions which I received for nothing in my childhood, I had, during my youth, my Sunday and holiday pleasures, my merry dances, and my pot of beer in good company, and with good music, too, of an evening—and a lot of other things of which your English workmen had not an idea when I was amongst them. It may be different now——"

"I am afraid it is not," said Hamilton; "but surely our manufactories must have astonished you!"

"I should have understood very little of my

business if they had not," replied Mr. Eisenmann. "In this respect England is a giantess, but, like a giantess, ought to be admired at a distance and not examined in detail."

"I perceive," said Hamilton, "that the people with whom you associated have made an unpleasant impression on you."

"Perhaps so, but I am inclined to think it was a correct one. I mixed with people whose habits and mode of life are, and will ever remain, totally unknown to you—it was probably before you were born, too, and may, as I said before, be quite different now—at all events it is too late to talk more about it to-night; I must look after my workmen, and then it will be time to go to bed." He lit his candle and walked towards an office which communicated with the Iron Works.

"What a different person Mr. Eisenmann is from what I expected!" observed Hildegarde.

"He is different from what I expected, too," answered Hamilton.

"I am beginning to have quite a respect for him," she continued, "in short, I think him a remarkably clever man."

"You are always in extremes, Hildegarde—first you unnecessarily underrated, and now you overrate him!"

"I suspect," said Hildegarde, laughing, "you are annoyed at his not thinking the English workmen happier than the Bavarian; his remarks, however, appeared to me very intelligent;

he is quite willing to allow England her superiority in manufactures, though not in the felicity of her lower orders. For a person in his station of life, you must allow——”

“Yes,” said Hamilton, “for a person in his station in life, I do think him unusually well-informed and rational, but what I find most to admire about him is, that he has not stood still between his thirtieth and fortieth year, as most men who are not actually moving in the world do, and which I verily believe is the cause of those never-ending praises of the good old times.”

“He is the first person,” said Hildegarde, “that I have heard actually give the present times the preference to those of his youth !”

“He has followed the changes of the world,” said Hamilton, “and that is a proof of intellect less often given than people imagine. Everybody’s youth must be, I should think, more agreeable than their old age. The world is full of pleasures for youth, which by degrees, slowly but surely, even under the most fortunate circumstances, cease for the aged. Happy those who, like Mr. Eisenmann, can understand and appreciate the improvement in the world—still more happy those who, when old, can find enjoyment in witnessing pleasures in which they can no longer participate.”

“But there are some fortunate persons who never appear to grow old,” said Hildegarde.

“Oh, don’t call them fortunate,” cried Hamilton ; “age must be felt by everybody, though

by some it may be borne cheerfully. Nothing is so disgusting as the affectation of youth in an old person. I consider it a positive misfortune to those who retain their youthful manners in old age ! To grow old with dignity, is not so easy as people imagine—I could write a pamphlet about it——”

“Pray do,” said Hildegarde, smiling, “I should like to learn to grow old—I—who have never really felt what it was to be young !”

“I am waiting to bid you good-night,” said Mr. Eisenmann at the door. “This is the last time I shall go the rounds, for I mean to resign my office to my daughter to-morrow—she locked all the doors, and bolted all the windows, for many a year before she was married !”

“He has just come in time,” said Hamilton, rising, “I believe I was getting very prosy.”

“And I very melancholy,” said Hildegarde.

The old man bade them good-night, and watched them gravely as they ascended the stairs and separated on the lobby.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

MADAME ROSENBERG took possession of her father's house more quietly than had been expected ; he resigned his keys and authority with a solemnity which quite subdued her,

and a whole week elapsed before any extraordinary bustle was perceptible ; at the end of that time a scrubbing, and washing, and painting began, which drove the old man to the neighbouring inn, and Hamilton into Munich, for some days. It was very disagreeable, but certainly the house appeared metamorphosed when it was at an end, and no complaints were heard, excepting a few faint murmurs from Mr. Eisenmann about the vine which was trained against the front of the house being covered with whitewash.

Hildegarde, to her infinite satisfaction, was not obliged to learn cooking—she had shown a too decided distaste and want of talent ; she became, however, a tolerably expert ironer, and it was amusing to see Hamilton sitting, day after day, beside the table covered with heaps of linen, a volume of Schiller on the philosophy of Herder in his hand, reading aloud, in order (as he explained to Madame Rosenberg) to improve his German accent, about which his family had become very anxious of late, and from which he concluded they had some hopes of placing him at one of the German courts ; however, he did not feel particularly interested on that subject, nor, indeed, on anything that had reference to the future ; he lived from day to day, reckoning the time profitably or unprofitably spent, according to its having been or not having been spent in Hildegarde's society ; he might truly say with Proteus of Verona—

“ I leave myself, my friends, and all for love.
Thou, Julia, thou hast metamorphosed me ;
Made me neglect my studies, lose my time,
War with good counsel, set the world at nought—”

And three months passed like so many days, and three more would have followed them in blissful monotony, had not a circumstance, trivial in itself, led in its consequences to an abrupt termination of this mode of life, or waste of life—whichever the reader may consider it.

The Munich midsummer fair had commenced, and Madame Rosenberg, not having found time in one day to make her usual purchases, decided upon going a second ; she put it off, however, until the very last, and when the morning came was suffering so much from headache that she was obliged to remain at home. As they had promised to dine at twelve o'clock with the Major, she thought it better to send Hildegarde and Gustle, and though at first she insisted that they were to go in their grandfather's little old carriage, she at length yielded to Hamilton's remonstrances and entreaties, and after he had passed a good half hour at her bedroom door, making promises of the most varied description, allowed them to drive with him, and be under his care during the day.

Crescenz received them, as usual, with childish delight ; her greatest pleasure on such occasions was to astonish them with a variety of tarts and sweetmeats, and they always found it difficult

to get away. On this day it was easier, for she intended to accompany them to the fair. Blazius had insisted on her buying some new muslin dresses, he was so thoughtful, and so generous ! In fact, they were a very merry party ; for Major Stultz had ceased to be jealous ; his wife now really liked him, and was more obedient than a child ; the thought of disputing his will had never entered her mind, and she appealed to him in the most infantine manner on every occasion, while, captivated by her beauty and innocence, he was invariably indulgent and generous almost to prodigality. She assured her sister, therefore, with the most perfect sincerity, as they walked together through the fair, that she considered herself the most fortunate woman in the world, that she could never have been so happy with anyone as with Major Stultz—no, not even with Mr. Hamilton—Blazius had quite convinced her of that !

They loitered about nearly two hours, and Hamilton, unutterably wearied, was slowly following Hildegarde, carrying her various little parcels of ribbons and pins, until the arrival of Hans with the carriage should relieve him, when he was suddenly seized by both arms and familiarly addressed by some persons behind him. They were two of his nearest relations, passing through Munich on their way home from Italy, and were evidently more glad to see him than he to see them.

“Where have you been hiding yourself, Alfred? We were at your supposed lodgings, and no one could tell us anything about you. Any letters left would be called for, they said, which sounded very mysterious, as, had you left for Vienna or Berlin, your letters would have been forwarded *sans façon*, I suppose. Come, give an account of yourself. I shall be asked a thousand questions, you know, when I go home—that is, if you don’t accompany us, which you might as well do, all things considered, and—Uncle Jack—”

No, Hamilton had no intention of returning home until the very last day of his leave of absence had expired.

“Well, as we start in a day or two, you will spend the evening with us at least?”

At this moment Hans appeared, and said, “the carriage was ready.” Hamilton desired him to wait at the termination of the booths, and then turning to his companions said, with some embarrassment, “Spend the evening with you! oh, of course; but I have promised to drive home a lady who lives a little out of the town.

“Oh, there ’s a lady, is there?”

“Yes: she is at present with her sister, making some purchases.”

“Ah, perhaps these are also some of them?” cried one of his cousins, peeping with an affectation of extreme care into one of the parcels; “ribbons, I declare, and hair-pins! *ergo*, young—where is she?”

"I don't—know," replied Hamilton, looking down the row of booths, at one of which Hildegarde was standing.

"It 's that tall girl with the small waist, I 'm certain."

"Well, it is that tall girl," said Hamilton, half laughing; "the sooner you let me go take her home, the sooner I shall be back with you."

"Let him go, let him go," cried his other cousin; and Hamilton, with an impatient gesture, walked quickly on, followed at a little distance by both. He took a hasty leave of Major Stultz and Crescenz, and hurried Hildegarde to the end of the fair. Just as they were seated in the phaeton, and Hamilton was taking the reins in his hand, his cousin called out, "Hollo, Alfred! you never asked where we were stopping. I think you are going to give us the slip!"

"You are at Havard's, I suppose," said Hamilton, not in the least endeavouring to correct the impatient movements of his horses.

"Yes. Wait a moment, I want to ask you a question."

Hamilton bent down; his face, by degrees became crimson, and he glanced furtively at Hildegarde, as if he feared she might have overheard the whisper; but she, quite unconscious that so many eyes were fixed upon her, was leaning back, and absently twisting her purse round her fingers.

Hamilton drove off at a furious rate, but scarcely were they out of the town, when, throw-

ing the reins to Hans, he stepped over the seat and placed himself beside Hildegarde.

"I am surprised," she observed, with a smile, "that you did not remain with your friends, and send us home with Hans."

"It would have been the wisest thing I could have done : it was confoundedly stupid, my not thinking of doing so. Stop !" he cried to Hans ; but directly after, sinking back on his seat, he added, "No—go on," and then murmured, "it is too late now. The best plan will be not to return. The less he knows, the less he can talk about."

Hildegarde bent forward. "Talk about what ?" she asked.

"You cannot understand," he answered, quickly.

"No : I perceive I cannot. I have not the most remote idea whether or not you were glad to see these friends."

"They are my relations, my cousins ; and that one who last spoke to me—did you observe him?"

"Not particularly."

"That is Harry Walcott, a great friend of my brother John's, the most amusing, worthless, extravagant fellow in the world. Were he to find out where I am, he would come to the Iron Works to-morrow, establish himself at the inn, use my horses, abuse myself, laugh at your step-mother, bully Mr. Eisenmann, and, for all I know, fall in love with you !"

“ Dreadful person ! ” cried Hildegarde, laughing.

“ As it is, he has seen enough—too much, unfortunately, I think,” he continued, with increasing irritation of manner. “ I think I hear his exaggerations to my father, his insinuations when talking to my uncle ! No : he shall never know where I am—nothing shall tempt me into Munich for a fortnight at least ! ”

“ You think, perhaps, that your father and uncle would disapprove of your being at the Iron Works ? ”

“ Think ! ” cried Hamilton, “ I am sure of it. My father would say I was losing my time ; my uncle, that I was making a fool of myself.”

Neither of them spoke a word until they reached home, and Hamilton was remarkably thoughtful during the remainder of the evening.

The next day he was as cheerful as ever ; and having from his window seen Hildegarde walking towards the arbour with some paper and an ink-stand in her hand, he took up the book they were reading together, and followed her. She had just finished making a pen when he entered, and throwing it on the table, she leaned forward and began, rather formally :

“ Mr. Hamilton——”

“ Pray, call me Alfred—I have long wished it, and we are quite intimate enough to admit of your doing so. I called you Hildegarde the first month I was in your house.”

"It is perhaps an English custom," she said, half inquiringly.

Hamilton did not answer. The fact was, at the commencement of their acquaintance he had considered both Hildegarde and her sister so infinitely beneath him in rank that he had almost immediately called them by their Christian names.

"I suppose," she continued, "if I know you well enough to call you Alfred, I may venture to say——"

"You may venture to say anything you please."

"Well, then—Alfred—I think the sooner you leave us—leave the Iron Works—the better."

"Do you?" he said, with a tolerably successful effort to appear unconcerned. "I suppose what I said yesterday, when I was vexed, has made you come to this conclusion."

"Yes; and though I cannot perceive that you have exactly been making a fool of yourself, I think it very evident that you have been losing your time here."

"I wish I could lose the remainder of my life in the same way. I have been immeasurably happy lately."

"You said your cousin would exaggerate—would insinuate——"

"Did you understand what I meant when I said that?" cried Hamilton, quickly.

"I believe I did; and I half wished you had

allowed him to come here, and see that he was mistaken ; he would soon have perceived that your friends have no cause for anxiety—that friendship alone exists between us.”

“ He would have seen no such thing, Hildegarde, at least as far as I am concerned, and that you know as well as I do. That you have limited your measure of regard for me is a proof—of—of—no matter what ; I am most happy that it is so.” And Hamilton felt at that moment as unhappy and indignant as he had ever been in his life.

“ Do you not think,” said Hildegarde, bending over the table, as she played with the pen, “ do you not think it would be better to leave us before you are ordered to do so ? ”

“ No,” answered Hamilton, almost harshly.

“ But,” she continued, bending still lower, to conceal her heightened color, “ but suppose I were not here, would you still remain ? ”

“ Can you doubt it ? ” cried Hamilton, ironically. “ How could I ever willingly quit this tranquil retreat ? The pastoral beauties of these grounds ! The society in every way so suited to my tastes and habits ! The——”

“ Enough, enough ! ” cried Hildegarde, seizing her pen, and with burning cheeks, but steady hand, she rapidly wrote a letter, while Hamilton, standing at the entrance, watched her with an odd mixture of anger and admiration. He waited until she had signed her name, and then

placing his hand on the paper, asked if the letter concerned him.

"I might easily equivocate, and say no, as you are neither directly nor indirectly mentioned in it ; but that would not be the truth. The letter is to Madame Hortense. I am now quite resolved to leave——this place,"

"May I read it ?"

"If you insist——"

He took the letter : it was in French, short and forcibly written, as most letters are when composed under the influence of excited feelings. Hamilton's anger increased as he read ; her proud determination of manner irritated him beyond measure, and, ashamed of the agitation which his trembling hands betrayed, he first crushed and then tore it to pieces.

"My letter !" cried Hildegarde, starting up with all her former vehemence of manner. "How dare you——" she stopped and sat down, breathing quickly and audibly.

"You are in a passion," said Hamilton.

"I was," she replied, taking a long breath ; "it is over."

"Oh, no ; be angry, I entreat ; say—do something outrageous or I can have no hope of forgiveness. We have changed characters ; you have learned to control your anger, and have me now in your power ; be merciful !"

"Rather tell me to be candid," she replied, rising ; "writing that letter in your presence was

an unnecessary display of self-control ; I was not so calm as I wished you to suppose me."

"Well, you certainly are the most honourable——"

"Don't praise me," she said, hastily ; "I cannot listen to you when I am so dissatisfied with myself. I fancied my temper was corrected ; I find it has merely not been tried."

"Your temper is a very good one," said Hamilton. "That you doubt yourself, and are on your guard, is rather an advantage than otherwise. I always have been considered so good-tempered, that when I feel angry it never occurs to me to conceal it, and the consequence is that you have seen me forget myself more than once."

Just then Madame Rosenberg entered the garden, holding a very diminutive note in her hand. "I am come," she said, "to remind you of a promise which you made to a lady, I hope with the consent of her husband."

"I don't know any lady likely to remind me of a promise, excepting, perhaps, Madame Berger."

"Exactly ; the Doctor will not be at home tomorrow, and as the weather is so fine she proposes spending the day here."

"Well," said Hamilton.

"Well, and Crescenz and the Major write to know if you will take them also in your phaeton when you drive into Munich for Lina."

"Oh, certainly," said Hamilton, laughing ; it was to Crescenz I made the offer, and it was

Madame Berger who accepted it. You may remember, Hildegarde, the beginning of the month, when we all went to drink coffee at the Stultz's, and had such excellent ices afterwards. I wonder they did not say anything yesterday when we were with them."

"I suppose," observed Madame Rosenberg, "that they saw Lina after you left; but at all events you will go for them?"

"Yes, and at a very early hour.

"Oh, of course," she cried, nodding her head jokingly; "that means at ten o'clock, I suppose."

"It means at five o'clock."

"Ah, bah! as if you could get up at four!"

"I can and will. Crescenz must give me breakfast, and I hope to be out of Munich before seven, for various reasons!"

"The dust, perhaps!"

"Dust or dirt," said Hamilton, carelessly. "If Madame Berger cannot leave so early, we can send Hans with the carriage at a later hour; though I would rather she would stay at home as far as I am concerned."

"I cannot believe that," said Madame Rosenberg, "for I never saw you get on with anyone as you do with her; if I were the Doctor I would not allow it."

"Nor I either, if I were the Doctor," said Hamilton, laughing; "but he is not, perhaps, aware that her usual vivacity degenerates into romping when she is here, and she is much too

young and much too pretty for anyone to expect that I——”

“Oh, after all there is no great harm; you only scamper about like a pair of children, but I should not like to see either Crescenz or Hildegarde doing the same.”

Hamilton looked at Hildegarde; there was something in the expression of her face which made him imagine that she, perhaps, had not quite approved of the scampering about of which her mother spoke.

“Am I to write an answer to this note?” she asked, as she took it out of Madame Rosenberg’s hand.

Her mother nodded her head, and left the garden. Hildegarde wrote, and Hamilton again leaned against the entrance of the arbour and looked in.

“Are you waiting for this letter too?” she asked, smiling.

“I was not thinking of it,” he replied. “I want to know if you, at least, believe that I would rather Madame Berger did *not* come here to-morrow?”

Hildegarde began to scribble on the blotting paper with great diligence.

“I see you do not believe me.”

“I do, partly, especially if you think you must be quieter than on former occasions, now that mamma has remarked it. The fact is, I think Lina altogether to blame, and I have often admired your forbearance.”

"Thank you," cried Hamilton, "I am quite satisfied now."

"Do not be quite satisfied with yourself," said Hildegarde, "for I must tell you honestly that I am quite disposed to be unjust to Lina; more than ready to put an unkind construction on all she does or says."

"Why?" asked Hamilton, with a blush of pleasure, as a faint vision of the "green-eyed monster" approaching Hildegarde floated before his imagination. "Why?"

"Because I dislike her. We waged war with each other for nearly ten years."

"Ah, I remember, she told me you were rival beauties at school."

"There was no rivalry on my part," said Hildegarde quietly; "I never hesitated to acknowledge her beauty: it is of the most captivating description, and even when she is most disagreeable to me I admire her person."

"You dislike her mind—her disposition, which is so different from yours," said Hamilton.

"I cannot tolerate her want of truth and honour; her, to me, unfathomable cunning. In one word, I despise her."

"You have been at no pains to conceal it," observed Hamilton.

"There was no necessity," said Hildegarde, beginning to fold up her note; "but," she added, "you must not let my opinion weigh with you; you know I have strong, and often unreasonable, prejudices. At all events, Lina's faults are not

of a description to prevent one from passing a long summer's day very agreeably in their society."

"She is certainly an amusing person," said Hamilton.

"She is clever," said Hildegard, gathering up her writing materials to carry into the house ; "no one can deny that she has intellect ; at school there were few to be compared to her."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE EXPERIMENT.

THE morning was bright and still cool, though promising a sultry day, as Hamilton prepared to leave the Iron Works. To the astonishment of Madame Rosenberg, it was so early, that she was obliged to wish him good-morning from one of the windows, her nightcap yet on her head. Hildegard was standing before the horses, giving them lumps of sugar, which they had learned to expect from her, and looking so fresh and beautiful that Hamilton began to grudge the few hours which civility required him to absent himself from her. Kneeling on the seat of the phaeton, he looked up towards Madame Rosenberg, and asked if it would not do just as well if he sent the carriage with Hans ?

"Lina Berger will never forgive you," she answered from the window.

"Dear Crescenz will expect you to breakfast," said Hildegarde, pushing away the head of one of the horses which had been resting on her arm, "I am sure she has already arranged all her prettiest cups and saucers for you—don't forget to admire them."

Hamilton drove off. He found Crescenz not only waiting for him, but with her head stretched far out of the window, watching for his arrival. She ran to meet him, exclaiming, "How good-natured of you to come on so short a notice, and so early too! Blazius is not dressed—he is so lazy in the morning—he never gets up until past six! We shall not wait breakfast for him, however. Which cup do you choose?"

"I don't know," said Hamilton, thoughtfully. "This is the largest, but that is the prettiest—I think I must have both, first this and afterwards that one."

Crescenz laughed; and between the history of her cups, and a discussion about her new half-mourning, the time passed until her husband made his appearance to eat a hearty breakfast, for he was quite as anxious as Hamilton to leave Munich early, he so very much disliked both heat and dust. They called for Madame Berger: she was dressed in the very extreme of fashion, and bounded lightly up to the seat beside Hamilton.

"Let me see how your horses can step out,"

she cried, while leaning back to offer Crescenz her little, tightly gloved hand.

Hamilton was quite willing to gratify her, his horses ready to second him ; at that early hour the road was but little encumbered by carts or carriages, and past the few they met the phaeton rolled with a velocity that made Madame Berger laugh so heartily, that poor Crescenz's stifled screams were for some time inaudible. At length Major Stultz spoke : " Mr. Hamilton, may I beg of you to drive a little slower—Crescenz's nerves are not in a state to bear——"

" Why, good gracious, Crescenz ! " exclaimed Madame Berger, " you don't mean to say you are frightened ? Mr. Hamilton drives so well that there is not the slightest danger."

" Oh, no ; I dare say not," said Crescenz.

" I should not be afraid," continued Madame Berger, " if it were night, and pitch dark into the bargain ! "

" How very courageous ! " observed Crescenz, timidly.

In the meantime, Hamilton endeavoured to " draw in his flowing reins," but——

" a generous horse

Shows most true courage when you check his course."

His horses were no longer to be restrained, and their impatient springing and dancing alarmed Crescenz more than ever. At length she could endure it no longer ; and when little

more than half way, insisted on getting out of the phaeton ; and Hamilton had the mortification of seeing her take her husband's arm, and with a look of infinite relief, begin to walk off as fast as she could.

"You always lead me into mischief of some kind or other !" cried Hamilton, provoked at Madame Berger's laugh of derision. "I shall keep out of your way as much as I can the rest of this day !"

"You will do no such thing," she answered, saucily. "Those two fools trudging along the road there only live for each other at present—Hildegarde will not talk to me, and I have not the slightest intention of spending the day with either Madame Rosenberg, who lectures me about my duties towards the Doctor, or old Mr. Eisenmann, who talks of nothing but cactuses and iron ! If you don't mean to be civil to me, turn back and leave me at home again."

"Civil ! oh, I have every intention of being civil, but I would rather avoid such scenes as we had the last day you were with us ; I was obliged to explain and excuse——"

"And who has a right to demand an explanation, I should like to know ? Hildegarde, perhaps ?"

"No," answered Hamilton, colouring ; "it was Madame Rosenberg, who seemed to think——"

"Never mind what she thinks, we mean no

harm, and I do not see why we should not amuse ourselves ; but I must tell you something which I observed the last time I was with you—Hildegarde certainly does not like our being such good friends ! ”

“ I don’t think she cares.”

“ You don’t know her as well as I do. Without particularly caring for you, she may—in fact she must, have become accustomed to your attentions—for who else have you to talk to ? Now, any lessening of the homage one has been used to is sure to irritate—should you like to make her jealous ? ”

“ Jealous ! ” repeated Hamilton, and he thought of what had occurred the day before in the garden. Could he in any way provoke her jealousy, he should be able perhaps to judge of the state of her feelings towards him ; if, as she professed, but which he could not quite believe, friendship was really all she felt for him, why then, the magnanimous plans, the colossal sacrifices he had lately so often meditated, would be thrown away, and he might after all share the fate of Zedwitz. Here was an opportunity of making the trial, without committing either Hildegarde or himself. The temptation was strong to make the experiment, and he again repeated, very thoughtfully, the word “ Jealous ! ”

“ Yes, jealous ; jealous of your allegiance. She will at first think I am to blame, but you must show her the contrary. You——”

"Stay," cried Hamilton, "what will Madame Rosenberg say?"

"No matter what ; I shall give her no opportunity of lecturing me. She is too good-natured to tell the Doctor, and Biedermann will never hear any thing about the matter."

"Biedermann?"

"Yes, Theodor ; he would be much more angry than the Doctor, I suspect."

"But what right has he——"

"Oh, none in the world ; but, you see I have got accustomed to his attentions, and cannot do without them—he is enormously prosy sometimes—but then he loves me ; even when he is scolding I can observe it, and attribute half his lectures to jealousy. One likes a little *sentiment* sometimes, you know, and once accustomed to to these sort of *petit soins*, it is impossible to resign them without an effort, of which I confess I am incapable ; I should die of *ennui*."

"But," said Hamilton, "do you not think there is danger in a connection of the kind?"

"Danger ! not the least. He knows that I loved him formerly in a foolish, girlish sort of way, and had we been in England, I have no doubt we should have gone off together, and been miserable for life. The Doctor is a very kind, indulgent husband, but he has not time to be attentive, and as I have no family to occupy my time, I require someone to talk to, and amuse me. Theodor is well educated, clever,

honourable, and all the sermons of my relations and friends together will not make me give him up. The world may talk, and perhaps condemn me—I care not, for I know that I never have done, and never mean to do anything wrong.”

“And,” said Hamilton, “if Biedermann were to marry?”

“Not very probable for many years; but if he were, I should find someone else. You, for instance, would suit me very well, if you were likely to remain here; though I am afraid I should find you troublesome.”

“I am afraid you would,” said Hamilton, as he drew up his horses before the Iron Works.

Hildegarde ran out expecting to see her sister; her disappointment changed into surprise when she heard what had occurred, and she said at once that she would go to meet her. Perhaps she expected Hamilton to accompany her, but he either was, or pretended to be, too much occupied with Madame Berger to hear what she said, and she set out alone.

More than an hour elapsed before Crescenz, Major Stultz, and Hildegarde appeared, all a good deal overheated, for the day had already become warm. They joined the others in the garden, and began to saunter up and down the narrow gravel walks, or to seek the shade under the apple-trees in the orchard. Mr. Eisenmann immediately gathered a bunch of fresh roses for

Crescenz, and Madame Berger, turning to Hamilton, desired him to bring her some also.

"I don't know whether or not I can obey you," he answered, laughing; "I have been forbidden to pull flowers without leave, ever since the day I beheaded some scores of roses with my riding-whip."

"Your punishment is at an end," said Hildegard, smiling: "I am glad to perceive you have not forgotten it"; and, as she spoke, she pulled a half-blown rose and gave it to him.

"Ah! that is just the one I was wishing to have," cried Madame Berger, holding out her hand.

"You shall have another, but not this one," said Hamilton.

"*That*, and no other," cried Madame Berger; and after some laughing and whispering, he gave her the flower.

Hildegard was surprised, although, by a sort of tacit agreement, she and Hamilton usually avoided any exhibition of their intimacy or friendship when Madame Berger was present; the latter continued, "I have an odd taste, perhaps, but my favourite flower is the common scarlet geranium. I do not see one here."

"The only plant I had," said Mr. Eisenmann, "I gave to Hildegard, and she gave it to Hamilton to put on his flower-stand."

"Oh, if it belongs to you," said Madame Berger, with a light laugh, "I must have a branch

of it directly, " and she bounded into the house as she spoke.

"This is too much," cried Hamilton, running after her. A minute or two afterwards a violent scream was heard from his room, of which both windows were open.

"Shall we go and see what has happened?" whispered Crescenz to her sister.

"No, it is better to leave them alone."

"Lina is growing worse and worse every day," said Crescenz. "Blazius does not at all like my being with her, since people have begun to talk so much about her."

"What do people talk about?"

"They say that Mr. Biedermann is now constantly with her; never out of the house. In fact——"

At this moment Hans ran past them towards a shed, at the end of the orchard, where garden utensils and flower-pots were kept, and having taken one of the latter, was returning to the house, when Crescenz asked what had happened.

"I don't exactly know, ma'am; I believe Mr. Hamilton put a geranium on the top of the wardrobe, and Madame Berger, in trying to take it down, let it fall, and it is broken to pieces."

"The pot or the plant?" asked Hildegarde.

"Both, I believe, mademoiselle," answered Hans, hurrying into the house.

"How long is she likely to remain with him up-stairs?" asked Crescenz.

"Until dinner-time, perhaps," answered Hildegarde, carelessly; "he has got a number of paintings on china and new books to amuse her. But now you must come and see what a quantity of work I have done lately; you have no idea how useful I can be; even mamma praises me sometimes!"

The afternoon amusement was, as usual, a walk in the oak wood. Hamilton and Madame Berger soon wandered away from the sisters, and after waiting for their return more than an hour near the little chapel, Hildegarde and Crescenz began to walk home. "Well, Hildegarde, what do you think of this?" asked the latter, looking inquiringly at her sister's grave countenance.

"Nothing," she replied quietly.

"So Blazius was quite mistaken, it seems; he said that Mr. Hamilton has long liked you, and that you were beginning to like him."

"He was quite right," said Hildegarde, "we do like each other very much, especially since my father's death; he was so very kind at that time."

"Blazius said it was more than mere liking. Now if you cared for him as Blazius supposed, his conduct to-day must vex you, you could not help feeling jealous."

"I have no right."

"Oh, one never thinks of right on such occasions," said Crescenz, smiling; "I remember the time I used to suffer tortures whenever he whis-

pered and laughed with Lina. There was a time, too, when I could not have endured his preferring you to me, but now——”

“Now?” repeated Hildegarde, inquiringly.

“Now, I don’t think about him, and I like Blazius so much that I never think of comparing them. Mr. Hamilton is certainly very handsome, but, as Blazius says, one gets so accustomed to good looks, that at last it makes no impression at all. By the by, how improved Peppy is since he has been in the country,” she added, as the child ran to meet her; “I declare he will be quite as handsome as Fritz—it is impossible not to like such noble-looking creatures. I must say they are both a thousand times more lovable than Gustle, who promises to be extremely plain. and not in the least like either of us.”

Hildegarde smiled at the discrepancy between the commencement and end of her sister’s speech, but took no notice of it, and they spent the rest of the day in the arbour, talking over their school adventures, Crescenz house affairs, and Hildegarde’s plans for the future.

Hamilton and Madame Berger did not return until just before supper-time; they entered into no explanation, and made no excuses; the latter merely observed, when arranging her hair in Hildegarde’s room, “I really never spent a pleasanter day; Mr. Hamilton is positively charming—quite a love. I must not forget to wear the wreath of ivy he took such trouble to choose for

me," and, while speaking, she twisted a long light branch with its deep green leaves among the tresses of her fair hair, and pushing back with both hands the mass of ringlets which covered her face, bestowed a glance of satisfied vanity on the looking-glass, and flourishing her pocket handkerchief left the room.

"I never saw Lina look so pretty as she does to-day," observed Hildegarde.

"And do you really not feel angry with her?" asked Crescenz, as she put her arm around her sister's waist, and they began to descend the stairs together.

"Angry with her for having taken a long walk with Mr. Hamilton?"

"Ah, bah! you know very well what I mean."

"No, dear Crescenz, I am not in the least angry," whispered Hildegarde, with a gay laugh, as she entered the room where the others were just placing themselves at table. Hamilton looked up, and beheld her clear brow and cheerful smile with painful uncertainty; Madame Berger bent towards him, and whispered "You were right."

"How? when?"

"She does not care a straw for you. I never believed it until to-day."

Hamilton bit his lip, and slightly frowned.

"Oh, don't be annoyed about it; you cannot expect to succeed with all the world, you know. I suppose, having nothing else to do here, you

have given yourself some trouble to please her, and it is disagreeable to find one's self mistaken ; but you may remember I told you long ago that she would exact a kind of love which few men are capable of feeling ; a sort of immaculate devotion, not to be expected from your sex, now that the times of knighthood are passed. She will never, in these degenerate days, find anyone to love her as she imagines she deserves."

"And yet," said Hamilton, "she has so little personal vanity."

"That I consider one of her greatest defects. What is a woman without personal vanity? Avoid during the rest of your life all who have not, at least, a moderate quantity of it ; without it we are abnormous, unnatural, and it is impossible to know how to manage us."

"You have really given me a great deal of information to-day," said Hamilton, laughing ; "a few walks with you, and I should become a perfect tactician."

"If you choose, however, to try Hildegarde further," said Madame Berger, "you must manage it yourself. She may think you now, for all I know, a victim to my arts and wiles, and more worthy of pity than anger."

Partly from pique, partly because he was amused, Hamilton devoted himself altogether to Madame Berger for the rest of the evening. He drew his chair beside hers after supper, and they continued together in the little dark parlor, even

after all the family had withdrawn to enjoy the long warm July evening in the garden.

It was almost night when Crescenz came timidly into the room, and in an embarrassed manner said that she was too much afraid of Mr. Hamilton's horses to drive home with him, and that Mr. Eisenmann had offered his carriage——

"His cart, my dear, you mean," said Madame Berger, interrupting her, without moving a feature of her face. "I recommend you to have a few bars of iron laid at the back, the horses will be all the quieter; they are accustomed to the sound, you know."

"I—I thought," said Crescenz, "that you would, perhaps, prefer going home with me instead——"

"Oh, not at all, my dear; I would not separate you and Major Stultz for the world; besides, I am not in the least afraid either of Mr. Hamilton or his horses. You see," she added, turning to Hamilton, "I take it for granted that you will leave me at home."

"Of course. I am only sorry," said Hamilton to Crescenz, "that you will not go with us; I can almost promise that the horses will be quieter than in the morning."

"Thank you," said Crescenz, rather stiffly, "but even if they were I should now decline your offer, as Lina has shown so plainly that she does not wish for my company, or, indeed, for anyone's excepting yours."

"I am overpowered at the severity of your remarks," cried Madame Berger, catching her arm, with a light laugh; "how fortunate that the darkness hides my blushes. I say, Cressy," she added, in a lower voice, "is it for yourself or for Hildegarde that you have entered the lists?"

"I—I—don't understand you," said Crescenz, releasing her arm, and hurrying out of the room.

"Order your carriage," said Madame Berger, turning back for a moment to Hamilton: "order your carriage as soon as possible, or I shall get a lecture from Madame Rosenberg, and I am not in a humour for anything of the kind just now."

The carriages were at the door together. "Hans may drive," cried Hamilton, springing into the phaeton after Madame Berger; and as long as they were in sight he seemed to be wholly occupied with the arrangement of her shawl.

"Hildegarde! Hildegarde! where have you hidden yourself?" cried Madame Rosenberg, about an hour afterwards, and a voice from the very end of the orchard answered, "Here, mamma, I am coming directly;" but even while speaking, Hildegarde turned again, and with folded arms and lingering steps continued her sentinel-like walk.

The next day Hamilton felt very uncertain whether or not he had acted wisely. Hildegarde was so upright and free from coquetry herself

that he feared she would not easily understand his motives were he, in exculpation, to explain them ; and even if he made them evident, she would condemn them. He met Madame Rosenberg on his way to breakfast ; heard the half-joking, half-serious expostulations he had expected, and replied to them as usual, with a mixture of petulance and impertinence.

He approached Hildegarde, hoping sincerely that he should find her angry, or at least offended, but all his efforts to discover anything of the kind failed ; she was, perhaps, a little less cheerful than usual, but not enough to admit of his questioning her. Before dinner she received a letter ; the handwriting was unknown to him, but though burning with curiosity to know from whom it came when he saw her unusual trepidation on receiving it, he dared not ask her, though he would not have hesitated to have done so the day before. In the afternoon, when he expected her to walk, she sent Gustle to tell him that she had a long letter to write, and could not go out. The next few days she chose to assist her mother in preserving fruit, and then appeared an interminable quantity of needlework to be done. Hamilton felt the change which had taken place in their intercourse without being able to cavil at it. He felt that he was to blame, but he nevertheless got out of patience, and began to drive into Munich every day. No one seemed to think he could be better employed,

and many and various were the commissions given him by different members of the family.

One day, just as he was telling Hildegarde that he should not return until late at night, as he intended to go to the opera, Madame Rosenberg entered the room ; she held in her hand a silver hair-pin of curious filagree work, and exclaimed rather triumphantly, " Well, here is Lina Berger's silver pin, after all ; not found in the garden, where she said she lost it, but in your room, under the wardrobe. Monica saw it when she was scouring the floor."

" Very likely," said Hamilton ; " Madame Berger mounted a chair to get at my scarlet geranium, which I hoped to have placed out of her reach on the top of the wardrobe ; by making a spring she caught the flower-pot, but descended on the edge of the chair, which fell with her to the ground. I was greatly alarmed, as after the first scream of fright she became unusually quiet, and although she said she was not hurt, she lay on the sofa without moving or opening her eyes long after I had transplanted my poor geranium, and mourned over it," he added, looking towards Hildegarde.

Madame Rosenberg laughed. " That was a trick to prevent you from scolding her about the plant, which she saw you rather valued."

" Perhaps it was," said Hamilton, colouring, " and I never suspected it."

" Well you can tell her your present suspicions

to-day when you give her the hair-pin, you know"; and she held it towards him as she spoke.

"I never go to Madame Berger's," said Hamilton, and he was glad to be able to say so, "but if you choose to give it to Hans, he can leave it at her house when I go to the theatre."

"Hildegarde, make a little parcel of it, and write her a line," said Madame Rosenberg.

Hildegarde took her brother Gustle's pen, and on a leaf of his copy-book wrote her a few severe words, which not even the usual "dear Lina," or the schoolfellow *tutoiment* could soften.

Hamilton smiled, and unconsciously pulled his glove towards his wrist until he tore it. "These are the worst gloves I have ever had," he cried, impatiently throwing them on the table; "that is the second pair I have spoiled to-day."

"The gloves seem to be very good," observed Madame Rosenberg, taking them up, "and as they are a very pretty colour, Hildegarde may as well mend them for you, but while she is doing so you must seal and direct this parcel to Lina," and leaving them thus employed she walked out of the room.

"Permit me," said Hamilton, half jestingly, a few minutes afterwards, as Hildegarde returned him the gloves, "Permit me to kiss your hand"; and then he added, "this seals our reconciliation I hope?"

"We have had no quarrel, and require none," answered Hildegarde.

"Yet you have been displeased—angry with me—have you not?" asked Hamilton.

"I have had no cause—I have no right——"

"But you know what I mean?"

"I think I do," replied Hildegarde, half smiling, and quite blushing.

"And what did you suppose were my motives? What did you think of me?"

"I thought, after all your professions of regard for me, you might have waited until you reached England before you began a new—flirtation."

"Then you were a little—a very little jealous, perhaps?"

"I think not—I hope not," said Hildegarde, quickly, "for it would be very absurd, most ridiculous. In fact," she added, frankly, "I did not care how much you devoted yourself to Lina, until I perceived that you wished me to observe it."

"I did wish you to observe it. I hoped to have elicited some spark of feeling from you in that way, after having failed in all others."

"And Lina Berger was the person chosen as assistant—as confidant, perhaps?"

"I had nothing to confide. I have never made any secret of my feelings towards you."

"So you wished to show Lina Berger and everyone else what you supposed were my feelings towards you? It was an ungenerous intention, Mr. Hamilton, all things considered, as any weakness on my part would have merely served

to give you a useless triumph ; but," she added, with heightened colour, "I am not offended, not in the least angry with you—or jealous ; and for the short time we are likely to be now together, I hope we may be as good friends as we have been for the last few months. The whole affair is really not worth talking about."

"I hope, however, you do me the justice to believe me perfectly indifferent to Madame Berger?"

"About as indifferent as she is towards you. You flatter each other, and vanity draws you together."

"And you do not mind our being drawn together?"

"Not in the least," said Hildegarde, composedly.

"I believe you, I believe you. I am thoroughly convinced of your indifference, and require no further proof. I am sorry for it, but—perhaps it is all for the best." At the door he turned back, and added, "We have not quarrelled, Hildegarde? we are friends at least?"

"Friends! oh, certainly, though ever so far apart," answered Hildegarde, with a forced smile. "One so poor in friends as I am grasps even at the name."

Hamilton noiselessly closed the door, and she bent over her work until some large tears began to drop on it, and a choking feeling in her throat induced her to go to the open window, where

she leaned out as far as the numerous plants would permit, and gazed long into the orchard without distinguishing a single object that lay before her.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE RECALL.

ABOUT a fortnight after the foregoing events, as Hamilton was one morning sitting listlessly in the arbour at the end of the garden, Hildegarde came towards him carrying a large packet of letters, which Hans had just brought from Munich. As she placed herself beside him he looked at the different handwritings, and murmured, "My sister Helen—my father—John, and—from Uncle Jack, too ! With what different feelings should I have received these letters a short time ago ! Don't go away, Hildegarde ; I have no intention of making you any reproaches or speeches, and I may, perhaps, want your advice about fixing the day of my departure."

She sat down on the steps leading into the arbour, leaned her elbow on her knee and her head in her hands, and remained perfectly immovable for more than half an hour. She was not musing on the past, or thinking of the future ; she heard her heart beat distinctly, and would, perhaps, have endeavoured to count its throbs had she not felt irresistibly compelled to listen to

a most inharmonious and lamentable ditty sung by the cook as she scoured her kitchen furniture near an open window. Some vague ideas of the happiness of those whose thoughts never soar beyond the polishing of pots and pans, or the concocting of meats within them, floated through her mind ; and then appeared a vision of a nunnery garden, with very green grass and long gravel walks ; and then Hamilton rustled the paper of his letters, and she expected him to speak, and when he did not she again listened to the monotonous song, and wondered if it had no end.

The song continued, but she ceased to hear it, for Hamilton spoke at length, and she turned round to answer him.

“ These letters contain the recall I have been expecting,” he said, folding them up, “ and also a large sum of money for my journey, more, much more than I shall require ; my Uncle measures my expenses by my brother’s. In short, neither he nor any of my family have in the least degree comprehended my position here ; their ignorance would shock you——” He stopped, evidently embarrassed. His uncle’s letter would, indeed, have shocked her ; he had offered to send Hamilton any sum of money necessary to buy off the claims which Hildegarde or her family might have upon him.

“ I suppose,” said Hildegarde, “ they expect you home directly.”

"They rather wish me to visit the Z——'s, as they have become acquainted lately with some of their connections."

"And you intend to do so?"

"Yes, I have no particular wish to return home directly, though I see they expect me in about a fortnight or three weeks."

"In that case you will have to leave us soon—very soon."

"How soon?" asked Hamilton, endeavouring to catch a glimpse of her face, which was, perhaps purposely, averted.

"You are the best judge of that," she answered, rising from her lowly seat; "if leaving us be disagreeable to you, the sooner you get over it the better."

"It is more than disagreeable—it is painful to me." He paused, and then added, hastily, "I shall take your advice and leave to-morrow." More than a minute he waited for her to speak again, one word or one look might at that moment have changed all his plans, but finding that she remained silent, he slowly gathered up his letters, and walked thoughtfully into the house.

Madame Rosenberg talked more than enough; she thought it necessary to put the whole house in commotion, and was so anxious to prove to him that all his clothes were in order, that she followed him to his room, and actually herself packed all his portmanteaux and cases; she then

seated herself on one of the former, and began to question him about what he intended to do with Hans, the horses, and phaeton.

"I shall take Hans to England with me, and leave the horses at Munich to be sold. I dare say Stultz will take the trouble of looking after them for me."

"Dear me, how surprised he will be—and Crescenz—and Lina Berger. Really, the whole thing is so unexpected, that one has no time to think, or feel, or understand——"

"That is just what I wished," said Hamilton ; "I hope not to have time to think or feel, for I leave your house most unwillingly, but leave it I must, as my father and uncle expect me home in a week or two, and I am going first to the Z——'s."

"Pray give the Baroness my compliments," said Madame Rosenberg ; "it was very civil of her taking the children home—that evening, you know."

Hamilton remembered the evening, but he thought it was very probable he should forget the compliments.

"Sorry as I am to lose you," continued Madame Rosenberg, "I must say I think your relations are right to insist on your return ; as my father said yesterday, a young man with your capabilities being allowed to waste your time as you have been doing, is perfectly incomprehensible."

"My object was to learn German, and I have learned it," said Hamilton.

"It would have been better for you if Hildegarde and Crescenz had not spoken French so well. My father says, too, you speak English now with Hildegarde; I'm sure I don't know how she learned it. I never could learn French, though I have often tried, and I am not a stupid person in other things. I'm very glad, however, that she has learned English, though I formerly thought it unnecessary. Four languages for a girl not yet eighteen is pretty well, as poor dear Franz used to say, and——"

"Four languages," repeated Hamilton; "what is the fourth?"

"Why, do you not know that she speaks and writes Italian quite as well as French? Mademoiselle Hortense is a half Italian, and she spared no pains in teaching her, most fortunately, as it has turned out, for the lady with whom she is likely to be placed particularly requires Italian, as she is going to Italy next year."

"So Hildegarde is to leave you also?"

"Yes. I was at first very unwilling, and, indeed, should not have consented were I still in Munich; but, you see, here she is never likely to marry, and after her sister has made such an excellent match, she would not be satisfied with our *Förster*, Mr. Weidmann, I am afraid."

"I should think not," said Hamilton.

"Now, as she is certainly remarkably hand-

some," continued Madame Rosenberg, "and within the last year greatly improved, too, I should not at all wonder if, at Frankfort or Florence she were to pick up someone——"

"Not at all unlikely," observed Hamilton.

"Or if old Count Zedwitz were to die, perhaps his son might again——"

Hamilton began to stride up and down the room with unequivocal signs of irritation.

"I see all this is uninteresting to you," said Madame Rosenberg, placing her hands on her knees to assist her in rising from her low, unsteady seat. "How can I expect you to care who she marries, or where she goes, or, indeed, what becomes of any of us now? In a few weeks you will have forgotten us altogether!"

"How little you know me!" cried Hamilton, taking her hand as she was passing him; "I shall never forget you, or the happy days passed in your house, and am so sincerely attached to you and all your family, that nothing will give me greater pleasure than hearing of or from you. I shall leave you my address in London, and hope that you, and your father, and the children, will often write to me. When Fritz comes home for the holidays I shall expect a long letter, not written from a copy, and in his best handwriting, but unrestrained, and telling me everything about you all."

"Well, I really believe you do like us," cried Madame Rosenberg, the tears starting to her

eyes ; “ but, after all, not as well as we like you ; and now, I think I had better leave you, or else I shall make an old fool of myself.”

Hamilton’s hours that day were winged ; they flew past uneasily, like birds before an approaching storm. The afternoon, evening, and night came ; Mr. Eisenmann dozed, Madame Rosenberg inspected her sleeping children, and Hildegard and Hamilton for the first time sat gravely and silently beside each other ; neither of them had courage to attempt the mockery of unconcerned conversation ; each equally feared a betrayal of weakness, and it was a relief to both when the time for moving arrived. Mr. Eisenmann retired quietly to his room on the ground floor ; Madame Rosenberg, after wishing Hamilton good-night, took the house-keys out of the cupboard and commenced her usual nightly examination of all the windows and doors. Hamilton sprang up the stairs, and watched at the door of his chamber until he heard Hildegard separate from her mother and begin to ascend ; he waited until she had deposited her candle and work-basket on the table in her room, and as she afterwards advanced to close the door, he called her out on the lobby, and said, hurriedly, “ Hildegard, I shall have no opportunity of speaking to you alone to-morrow, and must take advantage of this to ask you to forgive and forget all my faults and failings.”

“ I cannot remember any,” said Hildegard.

“You say so, but I know you think that I endeavoured to gain your affections without any fixed purpose. That is true—I mean, this *was* true until lately—but that is of no importance now. Then, I must confess I—I was not sorry for the unpleasant termination of the affair with Zedwitz. I now, too, see that I ought not to have come here with you, still less should I have endeavoured to make you jealous or——”

“Oh, I give you absolution for all,” cried Hildegarde, interrupting him, “and hope you will endeavour to forget how often you have seen me impatient or in a passion.”

“I have already forgotten it, and wish I could forget everything else besides that has occurred during the last eleven months. We have been eleven months together, have we not?”

“I believe so,” answered Hildegarde, thoughtfully. “It appears to me much longer ; my life has been so different from what it was before that time, I feel almost as if I had known you eleven years.”

The sound of closing doors no longer distant made Hamilton whisper anxiously, “I shall not find it easy to part from you with becoming firmness before so many witnesses to-morrow, Hildegarde ; still less should I have courage to entreat you once more to accept the little watch which you so unkindly returned to me last Christmas. Will you again refuse it ?”

“No,” she replied, “although I should have

greatly preferred something of less value ; I only wish I had something to bestow in return ; but I have nothing, absolutely nothing."

"Stay," said Hamilton, with some hesitation, "you have something which you value highly, though I do not know why ; a little mysterious bauble, which I should like to possess."

"Name it, and it is yours," said Hildegarde, eagerly.

He placed his finger on the hair bracelet which she constantly wore.

"Ah ! my bracelet !" cried Hildegarde, with a look of surprise, "if you wish for it, certainly ; in fact it is better." She held her arm towards the door of her room, that the light from the candle might fall on it, and Hamilton thought he saw tears in her eyes as she endeavoured to unclasp it.

"I only value it because you appear so attached to it," he said, half apologetically. "Before it comes into my possession, however, you must tell me whose hair I am about to guard so carefully for the rest of my life ; not Mademoiselle Hortense's I hope."

"No," said Hildegarde, holding it towards him.

"Tell me whose hair it is !" he cried eagerly, for Madame Rosenberg's heavy step, and the jingling of her large keys became every moment more audible. As she approached the staircase, he again repeated, "Whose hair?" but Hildegarde, instead of answering, sprang into her room just

as a long ray of light from her mother's candle reached the spot where they stood. Madame Rosenberg found Hamilton's door shut, and Hildegarde on her knees beside her bed, with her head buried in her hands.

And Hamilton never suspected that the bracelet he examined so long and earnestly that night was made of his own hair, obtained at the time he had been wounded in the head, by the fall from, or rather with, his horse.

The whole family were assembled at an early hour the next morning to witness his departure. Madame Rosenberg unreservedly applied her handkerchief to her eyes; her father looked grave; the two little boys, half frightened at the unusual solemnity of the breakfast table, whispered and nudged each other, while Hildegarde, pale as the wife of Seneca, was apparently the only unmoved person present.

Hamilton took leave of all the workmen and servants, shook hands with Mr. Eisenmann, was kissed in the most maternal manner on both cheeks by Madame Rosenberg, embraced the little boys, and held Hildegarde's hand in his just long enough to cause a transient blush to pass over her features and make her look like herself.

After he had driven off, he turned round in the carriage to take a last look, and it seemed to him as if her beautiful features had turned to marble, so cold and statue-like were they. Madame

Rosenberg was returning into the house, talking to her cook ; the old man was gayly playing with the children ; Hildegarde stood alone, motionless, on the spot where he had left her.

“Is that indifference ?” thought Hamilton.

CHAPTER XL.

HOHENFELS.

IT was late on the evening of the ensuing day when Hamilton reached Hohenfels, a moderate-sized, high-roofed dwelling-house, having two dark-coloured massive square towers as wings. It was beautifully situated on the side of a rocky mountain, from which circumstance it probably derived its name. Avenue there was none ; the narrow private road which conducted to it (though passing through woods with open glades, which, even without their splendid mountain background, would have successfully rivalled any avenue Hamilton had ever seen in England) was evidently intended to serve equally as an approach to several comfortable peasants' houses, which, apparently, more than the genius of an engineer, had originally directed its course.

The buildings, at a little distance from Hohenfels, Hamilton now instinctively knew to be a brewery and its appendages, and he examined them with less curiosity, but infinitely more in-

terest, than on a former occasion. If he did not quite consider beer (as some one has not inaptly pronounced it) a fifth element in Bavaria, he had at least so frequently heard its merits, demerits, and price canvassed, that he began to attach considerable importance to the subject, and rather prided himself on being able to talk about it.

On driving into the court, he looked up along the range of windows, and discovered with great pleasure A. Z. standing at one of them. He had not had time to write, or in anyway to announce his visit, therefore her first look of surprise rather amused him ; when they met, and she regretted that her husband was on a hunting expedition, and would not be at home until the next day, he was glad that no letter from him had interfered with the arrangement. They supped together under a large chestnut tree, commanding an extensive view of woods, mountains, and a part of the Chiem Lake, now glittering in all the radiance of a magnificent sunset.

"I had no idea," said Hamilton, "that you were so near home when I met you at Seon last summer. I understand now why you were always on the move, and we saw so little of you. By the by, I should like to hear something of the Zedwitzes ; they are relations or intimate friends of yours, I believe ?"

"Distant relations, but very near and dear friends," answered A. Z. "I am sorry I have nothing satisfactory to tell you ; the old Count is

killing himself as fast as he can with perspiration and cold water ; his wife had a fit of apoplexy this summer, from which she is, however, nearly recovered ; and Maximilian has, you know, been constantly from home since that unpleasant business with the Rosenberg family. He was with us for a few weeks, and I never in my life saw a man in such a state of desperation ; his only consolation was talking to me about this ‘cunningest pattern of excellent nature,’ this Hildegard, and as I had a great deal to do in my house, and could not always find time to listen to him, he used to wander about, writing sonnets, I should imagine, from the poetical expression of his dear ugly face.”

“So he told you all about it ?” said Hamilton.

“Yes, and about you, too ; that is, all he knew about you. He seemed to have dreaded you excessively as a rival ; indeed, he does so still, for were his father to die, I have not the smallest doubt he would renew his proposal, and perhaps be accepted.”

“I admire his patience and perseverance,” said Hamilton, ironically ; “one downright refusal such as he received would have satisfied me.”

“Circumstances might materially alter the state of the case,” said A. Z. “Suppose this flirtation with you quite over—you have left, most probably, without any sort of serious ex-

planation ; now I have no doubt you are very charming, but, you know, people do get over hopeless affairs of this kind in the course of time, and in the course of time, too, Maximilian will be at liberty to marry whoever he pleases. I cannot imagine his being refused again, he is so exactly the sort of man most women like."

"He does not think so himself," observed Hamilton.

"That is his great charm," said A. Z. "Diffident enthusiastic men are almost always popular. I have a decided predilection for them."

"I think, however, you are singular in your taste," said Hamilton.

"Not at all," rejoined A. Z.; "the secret may be that such men think less of themselves, and more of the person they wish to please ; but in nine cases out of ten, you will find that it is an ugly man who inspires real affection. It is very creditable to our sex, you must allow ; one so very seldom hears of a man who loves a really ugly woman."

"Perhaps you are right," said Hamilton. "My experience has not been great. I only know that I am now very seriously, and, I fear, hopelessly in love with a very young and very beautiful woman."

"You will get over it," observed A. Z., laughing. "A few months in London, if it were not so late in the year——"

"You are mistaken," said Hamilton, gravely ;

"neither a few months nor a few years either are likely to change my feelings."

"I am sorry to hear it," said A. Z., thoughtfully; "never will I sign a letter with my initials again."

"I had quite forgotten that your note was the cause of all this evil," said Hamilton, smiling, "but there would be no evil at all if Hildegarde liked me."

"So it is all on your side," observed A. Z., with some surprise.

"I don't know, but I am afraid so. If it will not bore you, I should like to explain, and ask your advice——"

"Stay," cried A. Z., "I don't at all know this Hildegarde, and I now do know something of you and your family, and shall therefore certainly recommend you to break off the affair, if you can do so with honour; and that you can do so is scarcely to be doubted, if you imagine her indifferent to you."

"But suppose she had been indifferent only because I said I could not marry?"

"It would prove that she is as prudent as she is pretty, and that is saying a great deal," answered A. Z., gayly; and as you can *not* marry, the least said about the matter the better."

"You do not quite understand the state of the case," began Hamilton. "You see I have a grand uncle——"

"Called Jack," observed A. Z.

"Exactly," said Hamilton ; "and this Uncle Jack made a fortune in India, in those times when fortunes were to be made there, and added to this fortune by speculations in the funds at the end of the last war ; we have consequently a great respect for him."

"Of course," said A. Z. ; "people always have a respect for rich uncles, both in books and real life. I never had one, but I can imagine the thing."

"As he had no children," continued Hamilton, "my father prudently chose him as godfather to his eldest son, who was accordingly afflicted with the name of John, but even in his earliest youth it was found that the name would not cover the multitude of his sins, poor fellow, and while I was still a mere child my uncle declared that John would inherit from his father more than he would ever deserve, and that I, and I alone, should be his heir. He defrayed all the expenses of my education, gave me ponies, and pocket money, and would have paid my debts, I do believe, without hesitation, if I had had any at Cambridge. Since I have been here, too, he has sent me large remittances through my father, and latterly, I suspect, forbidden the words of wisdom which usually accompanied them. The first letter I ever received from him was the day before yesterday ; he had heard—more than was necessary, more than was true—

of Hildegarde, and you can imagine his proposing to send me money to buy off—to pay—to satisfy—pshaw ! where is the letter ? You must read it, or you will never understand——”

“*He* does not understand, that is very evident,” observed A. Z. ; “You need not show me the letter, but go on.”

“When I told Hildegarde that I must return home, she recommended my leaving directly ; she had, indeed, advised me to do so before the letter arrived.”

“And did she give you this advice without any apparent effort ?”

“Without apparent effort, yes ; but she is not to be judged from appearances. She has been educated by a Mademoiselle Hortense, who has given her the idea that, besides controlling her temper, which is naturally hasty, she should endeavour to conceal all her feelings, and, if possible, stifle them altogether. If Hildegarde had not been naturally warm-hearted, hot-tempered, and intellectual, such an education would have completely spoiled her.”

“But,” said A. Z., “after having lived nearly a year in the same house, if you can have any doubts about her caring for you——”

“Stay,” cried Hamilton, interrupting her, “you are not, perhaps, aware that I proclaimed myself a younger son, and said I could not marry, even before I entered the Rosenbergs’ house, and, as, until very lately, I never seriously

thought of sacrificing my really brilliant prospects, Hildegarde is still unconscious that even, with the best intentions, I could have acted otherwise than as I have done. I have been more calculating and worldly-minded than befits such an attachment, but latterly, as the time drew near when I knew we must part, I was ready to brave all my family and be disinherited by my uncle if she had only said one word, given me one look, from which I could have felt certain that she loved me."

"I suppose," said A. Z., rising, and walking towards the house, "I suppose, from what you have just said, that you have some fortune independent of your family—enough, at least to buy bread and butter?"

"I have five thousand pounds. A legacy left me by a distant relation, but it is not at my disposal for two years. This would not be enough for England; but I think here, as you say, it would perhaps buy bread and butter——"

"Oh, yes!" said A. Z., laughing, "and roast veal and pudding into the bargain, but that is not all that is to be considered. You ought not to make so great a sacrifice without considering long and carefully both sides of the question."

"Oh, I have considered only too long," answered Hamilton, "but I see you cannot understand me, or know Hildegarde without reading my journal. I had some intention of leaving it under your care, at all events, and I shall only

beg of you never to refer to that part of it which relates to Count Oscar Raimund."

"I think I already know," said A. Z., "his father showed me the letter he had written the day he had shot himself. Does Mademoiselle Rosenberg know that she was the cause?"

"But too well, as you will perceive from my journal," answered Hamilton; "you really seem to know everybody and everything, which, however, no longer surprises me, as I am myself willing on so short an acquaintance to confide in you. I suppose other people have done the same."

"Not exactly," answered A. Z., "but as I know the Zedwitzes, the Raimunds, the Bergers, and even Mr. Biedermann, and as you, from the peculiarity of the commencement of our acquaintance, rather interested me, I have thought it worth while to listen, and remember all I have heard about you."

"How very kind!" said Hamilton.

"You say that thoughtlessly," observed A. Z., laughing, "but it really was kind of me, for I greatly prefer talking to listening on most occasions."

"Will reading my journal bore you?"

"Not in the least. I shall be curious to know the impression made on you by all you must have seen of the domestic manners you were so anxious to become acquainted with last year. Have you given up all idea of writing a book on the subject?"

"I have been a much too greatly interested actor to have thought of anything of the kind, as you will see."

"Before I read your journal," said A. Z., "that is before I feel any interest in this Hildesgarde, you must allow me to point out to you all the disadvantages of the step you propose taking, and remind you that the sacrifice of parents, relations, the friends of your youth, your country, and your native language, ought not to be lightly made. I speak from experience."

"But you told me," said Hamilton, "that you felt quite naturalised—that you had become a very Bavarian ! I know, too, you are more than contented ; you are happy. The Countess Zedwitz told me so."

"Very true," answered A. Z., "but I am a woman, and that alters the case materially ; both our nature and education induce us to conform to the habits of those about us—we have no profession, no career in life to give up, we have only to learn to enlarge or contract our sphere of action, according to the circumstances in which we may be placed. For instance, Mademoiselle Rosenberg would most probably, without hesitation, go with you to England were your uncle to consent to your marriage."

"I cannot help thinking that—perhaps—she would," answered Hamilton.

"And if she did, she would never have any cause to regret having done so, for besides being

united to the person she loved, she would only have to learn to live luxuriously, and habits of that kind are easily acquired ; but after having so lived, frugality is more difficult of acquirement—and that would be your task."

"But I have tried it," cried Hamilton, eagerly ; "I have made the trial this last year. I see that riches are not necessary to my happiness—I am convinced, that with Hildegarde and a cottage——"

"So you would live in the country?"

"Of course."

"And in the mountains?"

"Here, in your neighbourhood, if possible."

"You are bribing me," cried A. Z., "more than you know. I am in want of such neighbours, and although it is getting cool," she added, drawing her shawl around her, "still, as it is not yet dark, we may as well return to the chestnut tree, and perhaps walk to the beech-wood, which you saw from it."

On ascending a slight acclivity, a more extensive view of the Chiem Lake became visible, and a peasant's house, with its overhanging roof and long balcony, stood before them—it was built almost in the mountain, at least it appeared so at a little distance ; a noisy stream rushed out of the rocks beside it, and formed a series of cascades, while endeavouring to reach the green fields, and dark wood beneath. Under the numerous fruit trees which surrounded the house,

with their overloaded branches bending to the ground, were several wooden benches ; on one of these A. Z. seated herself, while Hamilton, attracted by the light from some windows on the ground-floor, seemed disposed to inspect the premises more closely. A loud chorus of voices made him hesitate.

"They are at their evening prayers," observed A. Z., "it is better not to disturb them. Come here, and listen to me. You have not often seen a house more beautifully situated than this, most probably !"

"Never."

"The mountain peasants know how to choose a site ! You have no idea how highly they value a view of this kind, or how they feel the beauty of their scenery ; their eyes and minds are from infancy accustomed to grand and striking forms—the want of them causes the *ennui* and listlessness called *Maladie du pays*, *Nostalgie* or *Heimweh*, from which all mountaineers suffer, more or less, when in a town or distant from their mountains. I can understand it, as I have actually felt this *maladie*, for which, by the by, we have no English name, when I was obliged to remain in Munich for some time, about two years ago. The peasant to whom that house and all those fruitful fields below us belong, is about deliberately to die of this most lingering and melancholy disease ; he intends to emigrate to America !"

"Oh, what a fool !" cried Hamilton.

"I have said as much to him, but in rather more civil terms," answered A. Z. ; "but all to no purpose ; perhaps, when you know his motives, you may think differently, though I cannot. The extreme cheapness of education in Bavaria is a great temptation to the peasants, when their sons distinguish themselves at the German schools, to let them continue their education, learn Latin, and afterwards study at the University. It is a common thing for them to rise to eminence in the learned professions, and the eldest son of my friend Felsenbauer here would most probably have done so, had it not chanced that when he had nearly completed his studies, that revolutionary attempt of the students took place in the year 1830, of which you may, perhaps, have heard. Whether or not he was implicated, is unknown ; but after having concealed himself for some time, and found that all his most intimate friends had been imprisoned, he wrote to his father for money, and went off to America. He has married an American, and is so advantageously placed at Cincinnati, that he is most desirous to have his family near him, and his letters are from year to year more pressing. The old man is now only waiting to find a purchaser for his house and grounds !"

"I understand," said Hamilton, laughing ; "you think that house, with a few alterations, might be made as comfortable as it is pretty. What price does he demand ?"

“About twelve hundred pounds ; but he will not get more than a thousand for it ; and is therefore likely to have to wait for a year or two before he finds a purchaser ; so you have plenty of time either to buy it, or change your mind, which I suspect you will do after your return home. At all events I recommend your inspecting it some day with Herrmann, who understands such things perfectly—it will not be uninteresting to you to know the financial position of a peasant of this kind, and if he have the smallest hopes of your ever being a purchaser, he will unreservedly show you all his accounts.”

While they were speaking, the peasant and his wife, followed by their second son and daughter, came out of the house, and a long conversation ensued. It was so dark when A. Z. proposed leaving, that the old man insisted on accompanying her home with a lantern.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE SCHEIBEN-SCHIESSEN (TARGET SHOOTING MATCH).

BARON Z—— returned the next day, was delighted to see Hamilton, and went about with him everywhere, showing and explaining whatever he thought likely to interest him. One of their excursions was to the

marriage of a wood-ranger with the daughter of an innkeeper, who lived deep in the mountains. There was to be a dance and target shooting match as wedding festivities ; and it was with no small satisfaction that Hamilton, at an unmentionably early hour in the morning, followed Baron Z—— to his room to choose one of his rifles for the latter. Hamilton did not, as on a former occasion, listen with indifference while he descanted on their merits, but examined them carefully, poised them in his hand, and pointed them out of the windows at the little belfry of the house he had visited with A. Z., and which he now chose as a target.

“You really look as if you understood what you were about,” observed A. Z., who was pouring out their coffee. “If you have gained nothing else by your residence in Bavaria, you have at least learned to get up in the morning, and to use a rifle !”

“Both decidedly German accomplishments,” replied Hamilton, laughing, “and learned, in both cases, from ladies. Madame Rosenberg and the Baroness Waldorf have been my instructresses, as you will find when you look over my journal.”

“Which I intend to do to-day, when I am alone and quiet,” said A. Z., “and then we can talk about it whenever you are disposed.”

“Time to be off !” cried Baron Z—— ; and Hamilton found himself, soon after, driving

through the wildest passes of the mountain at an hour which he had formerly considered ought to be devoted to sleep in a darkened chamber.

The road was still in shadow, though the sun shone brightly on the rocks above them, and it was only through an occasional cleft in them, or a widening of the pass through which the road lay, that the warm rays occasionally tempered the bracing morning air. For the first time since Hamilton had left the Rosenbergs, he felt exhilarated—disposed to enjoy life as he had formerly done. It must not be supposed that he was beginning to forget Hildegarde—quite the contrary—his mental struggles were over; absence, that surest test of affection, had proved to him that without her the best years of his life would be clouded; so completely had the world, and all relating to it, been changed to him during the last year, so different were all his ideas from what they had been, that his recollections of home were becoming ruins, and it was with difficulty that his imagination supplied the broken walls and crumbling windowsills of his former splendid visions of pomp and riches. His only fears now were of Hildegarde herself, he half dreaded a repulse; but he had resolved to brave even that; and since his resolutions had been formed, he had again begun to feel pleasure in everything surrounding him. When Baron Z—— stepped out of the little low carriage, which he called a “sausage,” to gather bunches

of the beautiful wild rhododendron, commonly called *Alpen rosen*, Hamilton sprang joyously up the side of the mountain with him, and experienced a boyish satisfaction in scrambling higher and higher still, to obtain a branch with deeply-coloured flowers, or a few sweetly-scented cyclamens.

Their destination was a village, which as nearly resembled a nest as could well be imagined, so completely was it surrounded by mountains, all wooded nearly to the summit; there were about thirty houses and two large inns. Baron Z——'s brewery supplied the place with beer, and it was, as he informed Hamilton, in the characters of a brewer and his friend that they that day appeared. They were, however, persons of considerable importance, as Hamilton soon discovered, for the marriage had been delayed until their arrival, and the gay procession was then first formed, with which preceded by loud music, in which a flageolet contended in vain with a couple of horns for predominance, they marched to the church. Hamilton, on perceiving that all the men had large bouquets of flowers, and streaming ribbons in their hats, immediately decorated his with *Alpen rosen*. As to Baron Z——, neither he nor any of the other numerous gentlemen who came in the course of the day to shoot, could be distinguished at a little distance from the peasants. The strong shoes, worsted stockings, black breeches, leather

belts with their curiously worked initials, loose grey shooting-jackets, and slouched hats with black cock feathers, were common to all. A nice observer might, perhaps, have discovered a difference in the materials, but even that was generally avoided. If ever a German nobleman feels that those who are not in his class are equal or superior to him, it is at a *Scheiben-Schiessen*. There the best shot is the best man. The consciousness of strength and power, which the free use of arms, and the habit of seeking pleasure and fame in their dexterous use beget, is not without its national importance ; such men can scarcely fail to make good soldiers, or defend their mountain homes in time of war.

Excepting while they dined, Baron Z—— never ceased shooting. Hamilton, contented with having acquitted himself creditably, began at the end of a couple of hours to wander about : he first looked into the room where the wedding banquet was being slowly served : it had already lasted more than three hours, which is scarcely to be wondered at, as between the courses, the more youthful part of the company made their way up the crowded staircase to a large room under the roof, where they danced ; the measured sound of the waltz step forming a sort of metronome to the musicians, who, at times, seemed more attentive to the movements of those about them than their occupation, thereby occasionally producing such extraordinary

and wild sounds that Hamilton allowed himself to be pushed up the stairs into their immediate vicinity. Finding a quiet corner, he tranquilly smoked his cigar and looked on, an amused spectator of a scene which formed for him a picture of the most interesting description, from its novelty and thoroughly national character.

The room, spacious and well-floored, was immediately under the roof, of which the rafters and, on close inspection, the tiles were visible. The musicians, placed in a corner and well supplied with beer, blew, whistled, and scraped with all their might, the violoncello, with its eternal tonic, dominant, and subdominant, acting as whipper-in to the other instruments. The trumpet, occasionally raised to one of the windows in the roof, informed the absent of the opportunity they were losing, or served as an invitation to the lazy. Diminutive beer barrels, connected with strong planks, formed seats along the walls, and on them the half breathless dancers, in their picturesque costumes, occasionally sat and rested ; a few elderly peasants were established round a table behind the door, and near them stood a fine specimen of a rustic exclusive, with his arms folded, and bright blue eyes audaciously following each dancing pair as they passed ; he lounged against the wall, until seeing some known, or loved, or pretty girl, he was moved to touch her partner on the shoulder, and however unwilling the latter might be, he was obliged in

courtesy to resign her until she had taken some turns round the room with the interloper, who, on returning her to her partner, thanked *him*, and the flushed and panting girl invariably looked delighted at this most approved mode of publicly doing her homage. Hamilton observed about half a dozen beauties who never were allowed to rest for one moment.

Light and shade were disposed as the most fastidious painter could desire ; the rays of the afternoon sun, as they entered by the open windows, rendered even the tremulous motion of the air and the usually imperceptible particles of dust apparent, while the gradually dispersing light made the silver-laced bodices of the women glitter, and the beaming faces of the men to glow more deeply. Here for the first time Hamilton saw the real *Ländler* danced, the waltz in all its nationality—as unlike anything he had ever heard so denominated as could well be imagined. It was a German fandango with nailed shoes instead of castanets, but there was life, energy, and enjoyment in every movement. The origin of the name of waltz for this dance is from *walzen*, to turn round, and this the dancers did regularly, though not quickly when together, but they often separated, and then the movements were as uncertain as various, accompanied on the part of the men by the snapping of fingers, clapping their knees with both hands, and springing in the air, while ever and anon they uttered a piercing

peculiar cry, something between shouting and singing. During the time the men performed these wild gesticulations, their partners waltzed on demurely before them, and when they joined each other again it was usually with a few decided foot stampings that they recommenced their rotary motions.

It was long before Hamilton felt disposed to leave this scene of rustic festivity ; when he did so, it was but to witness another of a different kind, for as the evening approached, and the noise of the rifles began by degrees to cease, all the singers and zither players in the neighbourhood assembled in the garden ; it was in the midst of them that Hamilton was found by Baron Z——, and though he soon after joined the latter and his friends at another table, he still turned round and endeavoured to hear the words or hum the chorus of their songs.

“Our national music seems to interest you,” observed an elderly gentleman in a green shooting jacket, drawing his chair close to Hamilton’s.

“Very much, but I find it rather difficult to understand the words, though I hear them very distinctly.”

“Of course you do ; a foreigner must always find it difficult to understand our different dialects, and we have many.”

Baron Z—— took a little book of songs out of his pocket and handed it to Hamilton, who, after a few unsuccessful attempts, at length was

able to read and understand one of them. "Are these songs ancient or modern?" he asked after a pause.

"These," answered Baron Z——, "are of an uncertain age, and are common in the Bavarian highlands; but we have some national songs of the same description which are extremely ancient."

"We know," observed the elderly gentleman, "we know from the poems of Walter von der Vogelweide that even at the end of the twelfth century the peasants had their own songs, which, to the great annoyance of the celebrated poet, were gladly heard and highly valued by the princes and knights of his time. The highest nobles then danced to their own songs, as you may sometimes see the Austrian peasants do to this day. The rhymes of the *Nibelungenlied*¹ and other old German epic poems are precisely of the same description as these songs, which is also a proof of their antiquity."

"And is the music as old as the poetry?" asked Hamilton.

"I believe so," replied Baron Z——; "it was intended for dancing as well as singing, as the universal name of *Schnadder-hüpfen* denotes; the word *schnadder* means to talk or chat, and *hüpfen* to jump or dance about."

¹ The *Nibelungenlied* is a very ancient poem, greatly valued but little read—like the works of Chaucer and Spenser in England.

“And is all your old national music of this gay *Schnadder-hüpfen* description,” asked Hamilton.

“Oh, no, we have melancholy and sentimental too, but our mountaineers are too gay and happy a people to allow the mournful to predominate, or even to have its due share in their music ; the sorrowful thought of one verse is sure to find consolation in the jesting contradiction in the next. The Alpine songs are generally of this description, and the girls who have the charge of the cows on the Alps sing them together, and continue to do so after they have left the mountains, which has caused them to become familiar to the inhabitants of the valleys. Then there is the *jodel*, the song without words, which has so much resemblance to the *ranz des vaches* of the Swiss, and which requires both practice and compass of voice.”

“Oh, I remember,” said Hamilton, “what you and some of the others sang when we were on the chamois hunt last year ; sometimes it sounded like water bubbling, and then came some queer high notes and a sort of shout—it was quite adapted to the mountains—quite beautiful when there was an echo. I should like to learn it.”

“You will find it more difficult than you imagine,” said Baron Z——, “that is if you have ever learned to sing ; my wife has never been able to manage it, and she has often tried.”

"I shall learn to *jodel* and play the zither, too," said Hamilton, "that is if I ever come to reside in Germany."

"*If*," said Baron Z——, and then he joined in the chorus of the song which was being sung at the table nearest them.

"How different the same scene looks in the gradually increasing light of early morning, and the deepening shades of approaching evening!" observed Baron Z——, as he leaned back in the carriage on their way home, and looked along the valley through which the road lay; it had become so narrow that it seemed about to close altogether, while a towering mountain, facing them as they advanced, appeared to prevent all further progress; and yet I scarcely know which is to be preferred in a country of this description."

"The evening, certainly the evening," said Hamilton, looking round; "but a little earlier; the sun should still be on those rocks above us and make them successively yellow, red, copper-coloured, and violet, as I have seen them every evening from the garden of Hohenfels."

"I wish," said Baron Z——, "I wish that we could see them from the top of our alp to-night; we cannot expect this unclouded weather to last much longer."

"Have you an alp of your own?" asked Hamilton.

"No ; but I have rented one for the last two years, and find it answers very well, the greater part of my cattle are there now. It was not, however, of my cows and calves that I was thinking, but of the chamois on the mountain near the alp, of which the *Förster* from G—— told me this morning. Now, as you acquitted yourself so well to-day at the *Scheiben-Schiessen*, I do not see why you should not become a sportsman at once."

"Do you think I should have any chance?"

"Why not? You must make a beginning some time or other."

"I suppose game is very plentiful here?" said Hamilton.

"Not what you call plenty, at least we have not grouse or black cocks as my wife tells me you have in Scotland."

"But I have heard of splendid *battues* in the neighbourhood of Munich."

"I dare say, in the royal chase, where eight or nine hundred hares, and other game in proportion, have been shot in one afternoon—but that is not my idea of sport. I prefer a chamois hunt to all others, next to that, black cock ; and I am quite satisfied if I shoot three or four during the season."

"Are the black cock so difficult to get at?"

"More troublesome than difficult, though I have occasionally found them almost as high on the mountains as the chamois ! It is the waiting

and watching—the being up before sunrise, that gives me an interest, though it generally disgusts others whose actual profession it does not happen to be.”

“I suppose,” said Hamilton, “it is the actual profession of those *Försters*? There was one near the Iron Works, and he always supplied Madame Rosenberg with game ;—she paid him for it, however.”

“Of course she did,” replied Baron Z——, laughing ; “and if you shoot a chamois you must pay for it too, that is, if you wish to keep it. I have myself no game whatever, but as the *Förster* rents the whole chase in my neighborhood from government, I have as much sport as I please, and in fact as much game too ; I pay for whatever I retain, and so do all the others to whom he has given the permission to shoot ; but I suspect his profits are not great, for we have a number of *Wildschützen*, wild hunters—poachers you call them, I believe, in England.”

“Yes, one hears of them continually in the country ; I begin to have a faint idea that they may be great nuisances.”

“I have no intention of exactly undertaking their defence,” said Baron Z——, “but here in the mountains, where almost every man is a good shot, and the ideas of some are rather confused as to the better right which one man may have more than another to shoot an animal roaming about among the rocks—the crime is, to say the

least, venial. I, for my part, would never pursue a *Wildschützen* with the wish to catch him ; but between them and the *Försters* there is the most implacable hatred and deadly war. When they meet without witnesses, it not unfrequently happens that they fire at each other ! If the *Förster* fall, he is immediately missed ; if the *Wildschütz*, it often remains long undiscovered. Last winter the body of a young man was found on one of the mountains here, several weeks after his friends had first privately, and then publicly, sought him. There is little doubt that he was shot by one of our wood-rangers, and the man was immediately arrested, but no sort of proof could be obtained ; the day of the young man's death was unknown, the wood-ranger had been on that mountain, but also on others about the supposed time—shots had been heard by some wood-cutters, but not more than could be accounted for by the game brought home ; in short, he was set at liberty ; but the fate of the *Wildschütz*, who was a handsome, good-humoured fellow, created much interest and pity ; so you see there is so much danger, and so little profit, so much romance, and so little vulgarity about them altogether, that they are not unfrequently the subject of a song or the hero of a legend. I am not even quite sure that the suspicion of a young man being at times a wild hunter would injure him in the opinion of any girl born and bred among the mountains ! ”

“I dare say not,” said Hamilton ; “women higher born, and better bred, have not unfrequently similar feelings, and the very word is in itself the essence of romance ! You must allow that it sounds a vast deal better than *Förster*, or *Förstmeister*, or *Förstcommissioner*, or *Förstinspector*. Everybody seems to be *Först* something in this part of the world.”

“And are we not surrounded by forests ? Are not all our mountains covered with wood ?” asked Baron Z——, laughing ; “can you wonder that, in a country where wood is used as fuel, the care and culture of it should be of the greatest importance ?”

“Then these *Försters* are not a—exactly game-keepers ?”

“No ; the preserving of the game is, however, always in connection with the woods and forests, The *Förstmeister*, *Förstactuar*, *Försters*, and *Förstpracticants* are appointed by government ; the under *Förster*, or wood-ranger, is the only thing at all answering to your idea of game-keeper.”

“And what have they all to do ?” asked Hamilton.

“Can you not imagine the care of all these woods giving a number of people employment ?” asked Baron Z——, looking round him. “The never-ending felling and drifting, and selling and planting ; the corrections of the rivers used for drifting ; the care of the game, and a hundred

other things, which I do not just now remember. The *Förstwesen*, as we call it here, requires as much, and as peculiar study at the University, as theology, philosophy, law, physic, or any other branch of learning. Had I been given my choice, I should have preferred it to all others."

"And what did you study? I mean especially?"

"Law," answered Baron Z——, and while he spoke the carriage rolled into the paved court of Hohenfels.

CHAPTER XLII.

A DISCOURSE.

THERE had been a thunder-storm during the night, and the rain descended the next morning in torrents. "I fear, Hamilton, our party must be put off for a short time!" observed Baron Z——, as he walked from one window to the other, in a disconsolate manner, after breakfast. "How I detest a hopeless day of this kind!"

"I remember," said A. Z., "that when I was an accomplished young lady, I rather liked a day of rain when I had a drawing to finish, or a new song to study—I do not dislike it to-day either, but for a very different reason. Had it been fine, I must have gone to the alp, to do the hon-

ors of my dairy to Mr. Hamilton, and now, without any incivility on my part, I can stay at home and quietly inspect the making of a hundred-weight of soap, which cannot be any longer delayed, and I expect," she added, turning to Hamilton, "or rather I hope, on your way from the brewery, where of course you will go to smoke with Hermann, you will visit me—in the wash-house."

"And can you really make soap?" asked Hamilton, rather surprised.

"I really can, and really do, as you shall see—but, perhaps, you don't care about soap-boiling?"

"I—rather hoped—that, perhaps, to-day you would have had time to talk to me about——"

"Oh! I always find time to talk," said A. Z., "my soap will be ready before dinner; it was begun yesterday evening, and has been boiling all the morning, so you see after our coffee we shall have the whole afternoon, and no chance of visitors!"

Just as all the bells in the neighbourhood were chiming noon, Hamilton walked into the wash-house, and there found A. Z. standing beside an immense boiler, filled with a substance very much resembling porridge; she was examining some of it, as it trickled down a piece of flat wood, which she held in her hand, and having dipped her finger into it, and found that it formed what she called a thimble, she appeared satisfied. Some few directions she gave to a lit-

the old woman, who seemed very learned on the subject of soap-boiling, and then she wound her way through the surrounding tubs and buckets and pails to Hamilton, and with him went unceremoniously to dinner.

When Hamilton, a couple of hours afterwards, joined A. Z. in the drawing-room, he found her turning over the last leaves of his journal, as she sat in a large arm-chair, beside the slightly heated stove. She turned round immediately and observed: "Well, Mr. Hamilton, you 'rather hoped I should find time to talk.' I have time now, and only wait to hear what is to be the subject of conversation."

He drew a chair close to her, and said, "First of all—your opinion of Hildegarde. Does she care for me?"

"I am afraid she does," answered A. Z.

"How can you say, 'afraid,' when you know it is what I most wish—my only chance of happiness! I fear nothing but a refusal now. Have you not observed that she has never said a word which could make me for a moment imagine she cared in the least for me?"

"Judge her actions, and not her words," answered A. Z.

"And if her actions should denote more friendship than love?"

"The friendship of a girl of eighteen for a man of one- or two-and-twenty is very apt to degenerate into love."

“And you call that degenerating?”

A. Z. nodded her head, and said, “We have no time to discuss that matter now, nor is it necessary; but there is something I should like to say to you, if you will allow me.”

“I allow you—wish you to say anything, everything you please.”

“Before I read your journal,” she continued, turning quite round to him, “I was disposed only to think of you, and your interests, and recommended you to return home, without again seeing Mademoiselle Rosenberg, or entering into any engagement with her. I give you the same advice now—but—for her sake—on her account!”

“And this you say, supposing her attached to me, and knowing that I am willing to sacrifice everything I most value for her!” said Hamilton.

“Yes, I consider the whole affair as the purest specimen of first love that it is possible to imagine; so sincere on both sides, that, were there no impediments to your marriage, I think you might pass your lives very happily together; but the sacrifices you are about to make she will not, I fear, be able properly to estimate, and you must be very different from most young men of your age and position in the world, if you have steadiness enough, after two whole years’ absence, to return here, change all your habits, and bury yourself in these mountains for the rest of your life!”

"I think—I am almost sure, that for Hildegard I can do so."

"If you do, I shall have a colossal respect for your character ; but in the meantime forgive my doubting it. Your uncle will send you to Paris, give you unlimited command of money, the temptations are great there, and with your brother John, and your cousin Harry as companions, I fear that at the end of the first year you will write Mademoiselle Rosenberg a letter to say, 'that finding it impossible to obtain the consent of your family to your union, you will not *drag the woman you love into poverty!*' I believe this is the usual phrase used on such occasions? And you can do this, without even incurring the censure of the world, for who knows anything of Hildegard? No one will ever hear that, for your sake, she has refused Max Zedwitz, and that she will again do so, if engaged to you, is a matter of course ; and no one will know that your desertion will condemn her either to being a governess or to a nunnery for the rest of her life, for she will never marry a Major Stultz, or a *Förster* Weidmann!" A. Z. paused, but as Hamilton did not speak, she continued, "I see my doubts rather offend you, but such conduct is, I am sorry to say, common, and I know you too little to estimate your character as it, perhaps, deserves. And now let us consider the other side of the question—I mean Hildegard's—she

has never, you say, betrayed herself to you, still less, I am sure to anyone else. To most women, the feeling of wounded pride, the sense of shame at being publicly slighted and forsaken, is quite as painful to bear as the real loss of the love on which all their visions of future happiness are built—all this may still be spared Hildegarde. You have left her without explanation, she thinks highly of you, for she does not know that you could have acted otherwise than as you have done—none of her family have the least idea that she cares for you, she even flatters herself that you are not aware of it—she will long remember you after you have ceased to think of her, but the remembrance will be unmingled with pain. When Maximilian again meets her, she will tell him that she never can return his affection, that she never can feel anything but friendship for him—but she will marry him, make an excellent wife, too—and may, some fine day, in this room, beside this very stove, quietly talk of you, and wonder that she could ever have preferred anyone to her excellent husband, whom we may suppose sitting just where you are now ! ”

“ Really a most agreeable picture ! ” cried Hamilton, with ill-concealed irritation of manner.

“ And pray what is to become of me ? ”

“ I have already said you will forget more quickly than she can ; and so, after enjoying

the world and its pomps and vanities for a few years, you will marry a Lady Jane or Lady Mary Somebody, who will be quite as amiable—if not as beautiful as Hildegarde?”

“You are considering this affair much too lightly,” cried Hamilton, starting from his chair almost angrily. “You talk as if it was a mere flirtation!”

“No: I have ceased to consider it as such,” rejoined A. Z. gravely. “I wish to save you from self-reproach, and Hildegarde from real unhappiness hereafter. The bitterness of parting is now over on both sides. With the best intentions in the world, circumstances might induce you to write the letter I spoke of—Hildegarde’s feelings now are very different from what they will be when she has accustomed herself to think of you as her companion for life. I would willingly save her youth from a blight which, however her pride and strength of mind may enable her to conceal it, will prevent the development of all her good qualities, and perhaps turn her generous confidence into suspicious distrust, her warmth of heart into callousness forever—but I have now said enough—too much, perhaps”; and she walked to the window which she opened, to ask Baron Z——, who was in the court-yard, what he thought of the weather.

“No chance of a change,” he answered; “the barometer is still falling, and it will not clear up

until there is snow on the mountain tops, most probably."

"That is the only disagreeable thing in a mountainous country," observed A. Z., turning to Hamilton. "When it begins to rain, it never knows how or when to stop. I am sorry, on your account, that the fine weather has not lasted a little longer; but to-morrow we shall have a box of new books, and perhaps you may find something to interest you among them."

"I am sure," said Hamilton, "that you will agree with me in thinking that I ought not delay my return to Munich even a day longer, now that I have quite decided on my future plans. I wish, if possible, to prevent Hildegarde from going to Frankfort, where that Mademoiselle Hortense intended to send her."

"I scarcely know what I ought to say," replied A. Z. "It is not to be expected that you will remain here listening to my long stories and the rain pattering against the windows, when you have a good excuse for leaving."

"A reason—not an excuse," said Hamilton.

"Well then," said A. Z., as she closed the window, "though I do not ask you to give me a lock of your hair, I feel so much interested in your affairs, that I hope you will 'Trust me, and let me know your love's success,' in a few lines which you may find time to write to me after you have reached home."

CHAPTER XLIII.

ANOTHER KIND OF DISCOURSE.

TWENTY-FOUR hours afterwards, Hamilton was in Munich on his way to Major Stultz's. He had not yet taken leave of Crescenz, and hoped, when ostensibly doing so, to obtain from her some information about her sister's plans and prospects. His old acquaintance, Walburg, was delighted to see him, informed him that "her mistress was at home, quite alone—the Major has gone to sup with some officers who had been in Russia with him"; and while speaking, she threw open the drawing-room door. Crescenz turned round, and then, with a blush of pleasure rose quickly and advanced towards Hamilton, exclaiming, 'I knew you would not leave Bavaria without coming to see me! I said so to Blazius, and to Hildegarde too!'

"So you have spent another day at the Iron Works, and can tell me how they all are."

"No," replied Crescenz; and the smile faded from her features as she added, "Hildegarde was here, on her way to Frankfort.

"So she is gone—actually gone!" cried Hamilton.

"She left us the day before yesterday. Blazius says he is glad our parting is over, for I could do nothing but cry all the time she was here."

"And Hildegarde?" asked Hamilton.

"She appeared quite contented with her future prospects, and tried to make me so too."

"Quite contented," repeated Hamilton.

"Yes; Blazius says she has not much feeling, and that I am a fool to waste so much affection on her; but he does not know how kind she was to me for so many years at school, helping me out of all my difficulties, and taking my part on all occasions—he has no idea what Hildegarde can do to those she loves!"

"Nor I either," said Hamilton.

"Of course not," said Crescenz, smiling, "as she only latterly began to like you; but for ten years she was everything to me! After we left school, indeed, or rather from the time we were at Seon, she changed a good deal, certainly. You know the time that——"

"I know," said Hamilton.

"But when she was here last week, she was just what she used to be; I could have fancied we had gone back two or three years of our lives."

"So she was quite cheerful!" said Hamilton, with a constrained smile. "It seems she felt no regret at quitting the Iron Works?"

"Not much, I should think, when you were no longer there," answered Crescenz.

"What! What do you mean?" asked Hamilton, eagerly.

"Why, as you were the only person who could talk to her—she must have found it very dull after you were gone, I suppose."

"Oh!" said Hamilton, "Is that all? Perhaps she did not say as much—did not speak of me at all?"

"Oh yes; we often spoke of you," said Crescenz, nodding her head.

"I flattered myself, at one time, that Hildegard liked me—" began Hamilton.

"She does like you—she said so repeatedly, and quite agreed with me in everything about you, but she does not like you as Blazius thought she would when you first went to the Iron Works. He said then it was very inconsiderate of mamma to take you there—that she ought to have insisted on your leaving the house when papa died!"

"She did propose my leaving," said Hamilton.

"Yes, I know—that was after Blazius had spoken to her—and he was so angry, when he heard you were going to the country, after all! He said—he said——"

"What?" asked Hamilton.

"That with such opportunities, he should not be at all surprised if you and Hildegard went to—the—devil! He sometimes does use such very improper words!"

Hamilton could not help smiling.

"You think I am joking," she continued, "but I assure you, he said such dreadful things, that I cannot repeat them—and I was so glad, when I went to the Iron Works, to perceive that Hildegard did not like you—in that way——"

"In what way?" asked Hamilton, irresistibly impelled to talk to her as he had in former times. She blushed so deeply, however, and became so painfully confused, that he added gravely, "You mean that you saw she only liked me as an acquaintance, or friend, and I believe you are right."

"Yes, that is exactly what I meant," said Crescenz, apparently greatly relieved, "for that last day, when you seemed to like Lina Berger more than you had ever done either of us, she did not in the least mind it—quite laughed at the idea!"

"Did she?" said Hamilton, with a look of annoyance, which Crescenz alone could have failed to observe.

"Hildegarde never will tell me anything!" she continued, "but I have made a discovery all the same!"

"Have you?" cried Hamilton, with a look of interest, which her observations were seldom calculated to produce. "What is it?"

"I have found out, at last, who it is that she really loves."

"Indeed! Are you quite sure?"

"You shall hear how I found out. Lina Berger came here, not to take leave of Hildegarde, for you know they dislike each other—but because she wished to hear something about you. Now, Hildegarde answered all her questions with the greatest composure, and when Lina found

that she could not embarrass or annoy her about you, she suddenly turned the conversation and spoke of Count Zedwitz. The moment she pronounced his name Hildegarde's whole countenance changed, and then Lina went on, and told her that the old Count was dying, that Dr. Berger had been several times to see him, and said he could not live more than a week or ten days, and that, as his son had been written for, and was probably on his way home, she now seriously advised Hildegarde not to leave Munich, or at least Bavaria until all chance was over of his renewing his proposal of marriage to her—that is, if she had still the slightest hope that such an unheard of good fortune was in store for her—above all things she ought to avoid going to Frankfort, as, notwithstanding all Count Zedwitz's professions of liberality, the idea of her having been a governess *might* be revolting to him ! ”

“ Poor, dear Hildegarde ! ” cried Hamilton, compassionately. “ Was she very angry ? ”

“ She became so pale and agitated that I expected some terrible scene, such as we used to have at school ; but to my great surprise, she thanked Lina for her good advice, though she did not mean to follow it ; said she considered being a governess no sort of disgrace—rather the contrary, as it led to the supposition at least, that her acquirements were more than common, and that what Count Zedwitz might think on the subject was at present a matter of indifference to

her—and then she went out of the room, and did not return until Lina was gone.”

“But, surely, you do not infer from this that she loves Zedwitz!” cried Hamilton, cheerfully. “It seems to me as if the contrary conclusion might be drawn.”

“You have not heard all,” said Crescenz. “After Lina was gone, though I knew she had only been trying to vex Hildegarde, I thought the advice might be good, as Blazius had said several times that it would be such an excellent thing if that cross old Count would die at once, and leave his son at liberty to marry Hildegarde. It is very wrong to wish anybody to die, but Blazius does not mind saying things of that kind—I don’t think he means all he says though, about the devil, or people being damned—it would be very terrible if he did—and I am sure he learned all those odious expressions in that frightful Russian campaign——”

“Well, a—and so—” said Hamilton, “when Hildegarde again came into the room, you probably recommended her remaining here?”

“Yes—but you know, I never could expect Hildegarde to follow my advice! and when she refused, I only just ventured, in a whisper, to ask her if she thought that Count Zedwitz still loved her—and she said, ‘Yes, better than any one ever loved, or will love me—better than I deserve,’ and then she went to the window and pretended to look out, but I saw that she was

crying. I am quite sure she has made up her mind to marry him, but I don't understand why she is so unhappy about it, especially as he is a count, and Hildegarde is so fond of rank ! ”

“ Is she ? ” said Hamilton, absently.

“ Oh yes, rank, riches, station, and somebody to love her exclusively—and Count Zedwitz can give her all these things, you know ! ”

“ Very true—your arguments are conclusive,” said Hamilton, “ and now it is time for me to go——”

“ But you will come again ! ” said Crescenz ; “ you will come to take leave of Blazius ? ”

Hamilton shook his head.

“ Are you really going away forever ? ” asked Crescenz and her eyes filled with tears as she added, in a slightly tremulous voice, “ Hildegarde said we should never hear of, never see you again ! ”

“ And she said it, I am sure, with less regret than you do ! ” exclaimed Hamilton bitterly.

“ I dare say you think me very foolish,” said Crescenz, trying to smile, while large tears coursed each other down her checks.

“ I think you very kind,” said Hamilton.

“ If Blazius were at home, you would have stayed a little longer, perhaps. I wish Blazius were here.”

Hamilton thought it was quite as well he was not, but did not say so ; and after taking leave of her, much more affectionately than he had

dared to do of her sister, he left the house considerably more thoughtful than he had entered it.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE JOURNEY HOME COMMENCES.

HAMILTON left Munich the next day in the mail for Frankfort; he had secured the place beside the conductor in the front part of the coach, which formed a kind of open carriage. and where he intended to smoke, and think, and sleep undisturbed. His late conversation with Crescenz had made a deep impression on him; it had again filled his mind with doubts and fears, which deprived him of his habitual cheerfulness, while his usual source of amusement when travelling—studying the characters or foibles of his companions—had lost all interest for him. He did not ask the name or condition of any one of the persons with whom he moved under the same roof a whole night and two days, and no one contradicted the young student, who, on leaving at Wurtzburg, observed with a glance towards Hamilton, “As unsociable a fellow as ever I met! A thorough Englishman!”

He wandered about the streets until the coach was again ready to start, and then, although the weather had completely cleared up, and the country, refreshed by the rain, was by no means

uninteresting, he sunk back into his corner, and overpowered by weariness, fell fast asleep. When he awoke it was quite dark, and as he raised himself slowly from his slumbers, the conductor called out, "Halt!—who is booked for Aschaffenburg? Who gets out here?"

Some passenger from the inside of the coach spoke, and Hamilton asked, "Is there a good hotel here?"

"Very good."

"Then let me out—my legs are cramped, and my head and shoulders battered and bruised. I say, Hans, you can go on to Frankfort, and bespeak rooms for me at the Hotel d'Angleterre. Give me my carpet-bag and dressing-case, as fast as you can," and Hamilton was stamping his feet on the ground with a feeling of relief amounting to pleasure, when a man with a lantern came up to him and demanded his passport.

"My passport?—directly—I shall be in Frankfort about twelve o'clock to-morrow, Hans," cried Hamilton, as the coach drove off; and having delivered up his passport, he watched the man with the lantern enter an adjacent house, saw the light pass from one window to the other, until it finally disappeared, and all was dark.

"This is pleasant," he said, looking around him, "and I don't know the way to the hotel, or even the name of it!"

"I am here sir, with a wheelbarrow for the luggage," said a voice near him, and Hamilton's

eyes now becoming accustomed to the darkness, he perceived a man standing close to him, and a dark figure at a little distance sitting among some trunks and boxes.

"Can you show me the way to the best hotel?" asked Hamilton.

"To be sure I can—for what else am I here every night, wet or dry!" answered the man, good-humoredly, as he placed Hamilton's luggage in the wheelbarrow. "If you have no objection, sir, I'll take the lady's things too."

"By all means," said Hamilton, looking towards the dark figure, which now rose and endeavoured to assist the man to move a rather large trunk.

"Allow me," said Hamilton, instantly taking her place; and everything was soon arranged.

"Thank you a thousand times," whispered the lady, placing her arm within his almost familiarly; and Hamilton, half surprised, half amused, looked somewhat curiously at his companion as she afterwards unreservedly drew closer to him, and at last clasped her small well-gloved hands over his arm. They followed for some minutes in silence the man with the wheelbarrow, who trudged on before them whistling; but as they drew near to one of the miserable street lamps Hamilton leant forward and endeavoured rather unceremoniously, to peer under his companion's bonnet; a thick veil rendered the effort fruitless.

"You wish to see my face," she said, in a voice that made him stop suddenly, with an exclamation of astonishment; and when she pushed aside her veil the flickering light played dimly over the well-known features of Hildegarde.

And where were Hamilton's doubts and fears at that moment?—removed?—dispersed? No; but they were dormant—sleeping as soundly, perhaps as uneasily, as he had been doing about an hour before. He scarcely understood Hildegarde, as with repeated assurances that she was very, very glad to see him again, she incoherently related that she had travelled to Wurtzburg with some friends of Mademoiselle Hortense's; they had been very kind, and had insisted on her remaining with them a couple of days, to recover from the fatigue of her night journey; that they had accompanied her to the coach, and advised her to sleep at Aschaffenburg; that she had recognised Hamilton's voice when speaking to Hans, had seen his face when the man demanded his passport, "And then," she added, "I knew that all my difficulties about travelling were at an end; so I sat down on my trunk and waited to see when you would recognise me!"

"How could I recognise your voice when you whispered, or your face, when covered with that impervious veil? Indeed, it is impossible to see anything at a few feet distance from these lamps, which seem but intended to make the 'darkness visible.' The moment you spoke I knew you."

"That I expected," said Hildegarde ; "otherwise I should have been tempted to preserve my incognito a little longer."

"I am very glad you did not—but where is the man with our bags and boxes?" he cried, looking round. He was no longer visible, though they could still indistinctly hear the sound of the jogging of the wheelbarrow over the rough paving-stones in the distance. With a merry laugh they ran together down the street, and overtook him just as he rolled his clumsy little vehicle under an archway, lighted by two handsome lamps, and where their arrival was immediately announced by the ringing of a large bell.

They reached Frankfort the next day, just in time to dine at the *table d'hôte* ; but Hildegarde's appearance caused so many inquiries, that Hamilton followed her to her room to advise her not dining there in future.

"I shall scarcely be here to-morrow," she said, pushing back her bonnet, while she rummaged a little writing-desk for some paper. "Oh ! here it is," she added, "Hortense's letter of introduction. I am sure you will be so kind as to go with me to find out the house of this lady—this Baroness Waldorf !"

"Who ?" cried Hamilton.

"Baroness Waldorf."

"Why did you not tell me it was to her you were going ?"

"Because I did not think it could interest you

in any way—I never heard you speak of her. Have you seen her? Do you know anything about her!”

“I met her at Edelhof—Zedwitz is guardian to her daughter.”

“Oh, tell me something about her,” cried Hildegarde, eagerly, to Hamilton’s surprise quite indifferent to the latter part of his speech. “Tell me all you know about her. Is she a person to whom I am likely to become attached?”

“I don’t know—I rather think not. Oh, Hildegarde, let me advise you, as a friend, to give up this plan altogether, and go back to your step-mother—If you would only listen to me patiently for ten minutes——”

“I cannot listen to you,” said Hildegarde, interrupting him, “for I have made an engagement—a promise to remain a whole year, under all circumstances, with the Baroness Waldorf. She would not make any other sort of agreement, as she is going to Florence for the winter. She alone can release me from this promise—but I cannot say I wish it, as I rather enjoy the idea of going to Italy.”

“Under other circumstances I could easily imagine it.”

“And under what other circumstances am I likely to see Italy—or even the Rhine, near as it now is to me.”

Hamilton was silent.

“Let us go,” said Hildegarde, taking up her

gloves. "You will not, I am sure, try to dissuade me any longer, when I tell you that I cannot endure the life I should have to lead at the Iron Works ; my habits and education have unfortunately made me totally unfit for it. I have made the trial, and must now with regret confess that the details of domestic life are not only tiresome, but absolutely disgusting to me."

"So, then," said Hamilton, "you have discovered that riches are necessary to your happiness?"

"Not exactly riches," replied Hildegard, little aware of the importance attached to her answer, "but something beyond the actual means of subsistence—enough at least to insure me from the vulgar cares of life, and to enable me to associate with people whose habits and manners are similar to mine."

"And how much would be necessary for this?" asked Hamilton, gravely.

"Oh, indeed I don't know," she answered carelessly, laughing, "nor is it necessary to calculate. That I have it not is certain ; and in being a governess I see the only means of satisfying my wishes at present, and securing a competence hereafter. If I remain ten years with the Baroness Waldorf, I shall receive a pension for the rest of my life."

"And do you think you could not endure these vulgar cares of life, as you call them, even with a person you loved?" asked Hamilton, still more earnestly.

"I shall never be tried in that way," answered Hildegarde firmly, and while she walked on, wholly occupied with her immediate concerns, Hamilton altogether misunderstanding the meaning of her words, concluded she referred to a marriage with Zedwitz at some future period. Thus unconsciously tormenting each other, they reached the Baroness Waldorf's house, and finding a burly porter lounging outside the door, they asked if she was at home.

"No—she was not—she had gone to Mayence."

"And when is she expected to return?" asked Hildegarde, anxiously.

"We do not in the least know, Mademoiselle, she left very suddenly, in consequence of a letter which she received. She is sometimes not more than a few days absent, and most of the carriages and horses are still here. Who shall I say——?"

"It is of no consequence," said Hamilton, "we merely wished to know if a young lady from Munich was not expected about this time?"

The man said he would inquire, entered the house, but returned almost directly, saying, that no one was expected, excepting perhaps Count Zedwitz on his way home.

Hamilton and Hildegarde walked on together for some minutes in silence; at length the latter observed, half inquiringly, "I suppose I have no right to be offended with this Baroness Waldorf?"

It must have been urgent business which could make her leave Frankfort just when she appointed me to be here?"

"I should think so," said Hamilton, "but she might have made some arrangement for your reception during her absence. This thoughtlessness about you will scarcely prepossess you in her favour."

"Rich people are seldom considerate," began Hildegarde, as if she intended to moralise; but suddenly stopping, she added: "You are right—she has placed me in a very unpleasant position—if she do not return in a day or two, I shall neither have the means of remaining here or returning home."

"Our fortunate meeting at Aschaffenburg," said Hamilton, "will save you from all annoyances of that description, as you know I can arrange everything with your mother. At all events, I shall not leave you now until you are either at home again or residing with this—to say the least—very thoughtless person."

"But will not delay inconvenience you?" asked Hildegarde.

"Not in the least. As far as I am concerned I should be glad that the Baroness would not return for six weeks! All places are alike to me where you are; and much as we were together at the Iron Works, you have more time to bestow on me here; and therefore I am proportionably happier."

This kind of speech she never answered ; and after a short pause Hamilton proposed showing her the gardens which surrounded the town, and in their shady walks they wandered until evening.

CHAPTER XLV.

WHAT OCCURRED AT THE HOTEL D'ANGLETERRE IN FRANKFORT.

THE next day after dinner, while Hamilton went to his banker's, Hildegard looked out of her window, and watched, with a sort of quiet indifference, the arrival of two travelling carriages at the hotel. Out of the first sprang a tall large man, who, merely raising two fingers to his travelling cap by way of salutation, instantly disappeared—and even while the heated and tired horses were still being led up and down the yard others were brought out, and the servant, after great bustling and hurrying, followed his master into the hotel. Again the cracking of the whips and ringing of bells became audible, and another and larger carriage arrived—decidedly English. The well-built vehicle swung easily with all its weight of imperials and servants' seats behind, and out of it stepped a tall, thin gentleman, with a grey hat, a grey coat, grey trousers, grey gaiters, and grey whiskers ! An elderly lady followed, her face half concealed by

her pendent lace veil, and two young and pretty girls stopped for a moment to inspect the building they were about to enter. Hildegarde looked at her watch, it was the hour that Hamilton told her he would return, so she locked her door, and began slowly to walk along the corridor and descend the stairs. The English family were just turning into a large suite of rooms on the first floor as she passed—the gentleman in grey had stopped at the door, his hat fast on his head; he turned to his wife, who was entering, and observed, quite loud enough for Hildegarde to hear, “By Jove, that ’s the handsomest girl I have seen for a long time!” The lady turned round and deliberately raised her *lorgnette* to her eye, while their two daughters, after a hasty glance, exclaimed, “Oh, papa, I really do think she understood you.” Hildegarde walked quickly on, but met so many servants and strangers that she took refuge at last in the large dining-room, which at that hour was generally quite unoccupied.

One solitary individual sat at the enormous table. He seemed to have been dining, and Hildegarde walked to one of the windows without looking at him. Soon after she heard him striding up and down the room, and as the waiter entered with some fruit and *confitures*, he asked rather impatiently, “Has my servant not yet dined? Tell him to make haste—he knows we have no time to lose.”

The voice was familiar to Hildegarde, she unconsciously turned round to look at the speaker, and was instantly recognised by Count Zedwitz, who, with a look of astonishment, hurried toward her, exclaiming, "Mademoiselle Rosenberg! What on earth has brought you to Frankfort?"

"I came here intending to go to a Baroness Waldorf as governess to her daughter—she has gone to Mayence, I hear, and——"

"And you are here alone, unprotected, and I cannot offer to stay with you—I do not know if you have heard that my father is dying—no hope whatever of his recovery; I only received the intelligence yesterday, and am now travelling night and day to reach home in time to see him once more!"

At this moment the servant entered to say that the carriage was ready.

"Very well: you may go—and—shut the door—Hildegarde, I mean Mademoiselle Rosenberg—do not remain here. Give up this idea of going to Ida Waldorf; it will never answer—believe me you will be most unhappy!"

"It must answer," said Hildegarde, "and I shall not be unhappy, for the idea of being a governess is familiar to me from my infancy, and has therefore lost all its terrors."

"Excuse my questioning you," cried Zedwitz quickly, "but may I ask how you happen to become acquainted with the Baroness Waldorf?"

"I do not know her at all—I never saw her—

it was all arranged by Mademoiselle Hortense, one of the governesses of our school."

"Did the Baroness Waldorf know your name?" asked Zedwitz, eagerly.

"At first, perhaps not," answered Hildegarde, with a look of surprise, "but in the letter which told her that I had left Munich, Mademoiselle Hortense must have mentioned it—I should think my name a matter of very little importance!"

"In this instance, you are mistaken—I—I fear the Baroness is not likely to return for some time—I——"

"Her servant said she would not be long absent—that her leaving was quite a sudden thing," observed Hildegarde.

"Her leaving when she expected you was unpardonable, cruel, ungenerous!" exclaimed Zedwitz, vehemently.

"I was rather shocked at first myself, but I afterwards thought she had not perhaps received the letter in time——"

"She did receive it, I am sure she did—it was the letter which—Oh, Mademoiselle Rosenberg, do not remain here any longer—return to your relations, return with me now—at once."

Hildegarde blushed intensely.

"I shall send my servant with the carriage," he added quickly, "and we can travel in the diligence, or in any way you please."

"You are very kind," said Hildegarde, but I

consider myself engaged to this Baroness Waldorf, and until I hear from her——”

“You will not hear from her, you will never hear from her!” he cried, impatiently, “and I must leave you; I cannot, dare not delay my return home now!”

Again Hildegard blushed, she endeavoured to name Hamilton, but the words died on her lips, and her confusion increased every moment. Some people began to stray into the room, and Zedwitz added in an agitated whisper: “God forgive me for thinking of anything but my father when he is lying on his death-bed; the peculiarity of our position must be my excuse for telling you at such a time, that my feelings toward you are unchanged, unchangeable. Return to your family, and let me hope that time may so far overcome your dislike, or indifference, whichever it be——”

“Oh, Count Zedwitz, it is neither,” said Hildegard, with evident effort. “I should be unworthy of such regard as you feel for me, were I not now to tell you that—I have—long—loved another.”

“Hamilton of course—I always feared it.”

Hildegard was silent.

“If you are engaged to him, tell me so; it is the only means of effectually crushing all my hopes at once!”

“We have no engagement, he cannot enter into any; he does not even know that I regard him otherwise than as a friend!”

"Then listen to me Hildegarde: notwithstanding all the admiration, all the love which he undoubtedly feels for you now—when he has been some time at home among the friends and companions of his youth—he will forget you!"

"I think he will," said Hildegarde with a deep sigh.

"And you too will forget this youthful fancy," continued Zedwitz.

"Youthful fancy!" she repeated slowly, "I fear I have neither youthful fancies nor youthful feelings; I have had no youth!"

"It will come like a late spring, and bestow on you at once those blessings which others receive so gradually, that they are insensible to them."

Hildegarde shook her head and turned to the window. Zedwitz seemed to wish to say something which embarrassed him. "In case you should find this hotel more expensive than you expected," he began in an hesitating manner.

"Oh, not at all expensive," said Hildegarde. "I had no idea one could live so cheaply at such a place!"

Zedwitz looked surprised; he would have been more so if he had seen the bill which she had paid Hamilton with such childish satisfaction a couple of hours before. It is needless to say that it had been written by him, as soon as he had discovered that she had not the most remote idea of the expenses of travelling, that he had taken advantage of her ignorance to prevent her feeling any annoyance or uneasiness.

“I cannot tell you how unwilling I am to leave you,” said Zedwitz, after a pause ; but go I must. Until we meet again, let me indulge the hope that a time may come——”

Just at that moment the hotel-keeper entered the room and approached the window where they were standing. Zedwitz turned round, and Hildegarde in her anxiety to undeceive him, and fearing he was leaving her under a false impression, stretched out her hand to detain him ; the action was misunderstood, he caught it between both his, and while she endeavoured in vain to stammer a few words of explanation, he whispered, “Thank you a thousand times, you do not know how even this faint ray of hope will lighten the gloominess of my present journey !”

He then took the innkeeper aside, and spoke long and earnestly to him about her, said he knew her family—requested him to let her know every opportunity that might offer for a return to Munich in respectable society—gave him his address, the name of his banker, and unlimited credit on her account ; and just as the innkeeper, with an only half suppressed smile of amusement, was about to explain to him that he need not be so uneasy about the lady, as she was already under the protection of a young Englishman, Zedwitz, reproaching himself for the delay which had occurred, sprang into the carriage, and a moment after it rolled from under the archway past the window where Hildegarde still stood, a

prey to the most distressing and contending emotions.

After waiting more than half an hour longer, and Hamilton not appearing, she retired to her room, supposing some unexpected business had detained him ; but when several hours elapsed, and he was still absent, she became uneasy. A feeling of delicacy prevented her from making any inquiries, and she sat at her window, long after dusk, trying to discover him in every tall dark figure she saw moving near the entrance or in the court below. A sensation of utter loneliness came over her, thoughts of the most melancholy description chased each other through her mind ; when, from a reverie of this kind, she recognised the well-known quick step, and a low knock at the door made her conscious that Hamilton was near ; all the painful reminiscences—uncertainties—Zedwitz—everything, was in a moment forgotten ; and she rose quickly and joyously from her chair to meet him. It was too dark for Hamilton to see the tears which still lingered in her long eye-lashes, and too dark for her to observe the flushed and irritated expression of his whole countenance.

“ Shall I light the candles ? ” she asked cheerfully.

“ If you wish it, but I prefer the room as it is.”

She sat down near him, and after a pause observed, “ You were long absent ; was there any difficulty at the bankers ? ”

"None whatever." Another pause—then suddenly turning towards her, he said quickly, "I have been thinking that as the Baroness Waldorf has a house at Mayence, she may be longer absent than her servants supposed. A few hours would take you to Mayence."

"Do you think it necessary to follow her there?"

"Not exactly necessary, but why not? You have often wished to see the Rhine."

"Oh, it would be too delightful!" exclaimed Hildegarde.

"If you think so," said Hamilton, every trace of annoyance disappearing from his face, "why, the sooner we go the better."

"But the expense," said Hildegarde, hesitatingly.

"Will not be greater than remaining here; do not let that weigh with you for a moment."

"Perhaps I ought to write to my mother, or Hortense?"

"You cannot have an answer for several days, and it is better to wait until you have seen the Baroness Waldorf; I should think whether you were here or at Mayence must be a matter of indifference to them, and I am sure your mother would be quite satisfied if she knew that you were under my care!"

"That I think too," said Hildegarde, "and I should like to put an end to my present state of uncertainty as soon as possible. I do not," she

continued, half laughing, "I do not feel any sort of scruples about travelling with you ; I suppose, because we have lived so long in the same house, and I know you so well ; but when Count Zedwitz to-day proposed my returning home with him——"

"Zedwitz ! To-day !" repeated Hamilton, amazed.

"Yes. In passing through Frankfort to-day, he dined and changed horses here. I saw him for a few minutes when I was waiting for your return ; he strongly advised me not to go to the Baroness Waldorf, and seemed, oddly enough, to think she had gone away on purpose."

"Not impossible—not improbable. Did he explain, in any way, the cause of his suspicions?"

"No, he had not time, his father is dying, and he is, of course, most anxious to get home. He—he went away just as I was going to tell him that you was here——" she stopped, embarrassed.

"Hildegarde, let us go to Mayence," cried Hamilton, abruptly.

"As early as you please to-morrow morning," she answered, cheerfully.

"Not to-morrow morning—this evening—in an hour—in half an hour !"

"But—but it is night—almost dark already."

"Well, what difference does that make?"

"They told me never to travel at night ; it was to avoid doing so that I stopped at Aschaffenburg."

"That was when you were alone, and travelling in a public carriage."

"I do not, however, see any necessity for such haste," she said quietly, "and, therefore, if you have no objections, I should greatly prefer waiting until morning."

"But I have an objection, and you will greatly oblige me by leaving to-night."

"I suppose you have some very good reason for what appears to me a most unnecessary exercise of the power which chance has given you over me?"

"I *have* a reason," began Hamilton, and there he stopped. How could he tell her that he had recognised his own coat-of-arms on a carriage in the yard—that he had questioned the *courier*, who was unpacking it, and discovered that the same uncle who had been in Saltzburg the year before, was now on his way to Baden-Baden with his wife and daughters; that he dreaded their discovering Hildegard's being with him, feared the ungenerous conclusions they might draw from her present position; and that, to avoid a chance meeting, he had wandered about the least frequented streets, until the shades of evening, and the certainty of their being engaged at the tea-table, had enabled him to pass their apartments, with the hope of not being discovered. To attempt an explanation with Hildegard would be sufficient to make her insist on his leaving her instantly; his only chance was to

use his personal influence and try to persuade her to leave Frankfort that night, before they had been seen—before the “strangers’ book” had given rise to any inquiries about them.

“Well,” said Hildegarde, “I have surely a right to hear your reason?”

“Right! Oh, if we talk of rights, it is you alone who should name the day and hour of departure—you alone who have a right to dictate; but I was asking a favour, I wish most particularly to be in Mayence at a very early hour to-morrow.”

“And if we leave at three or four o’clock in the morning, will not that be early enough?”

Hamilton looked only half satisfied.

“I do not like the appearance of going off at night in so sudden and mysterious a manner—not even—with you,” said Hildegarde, candidly.

“Perhaps you are right—but at three o’clock in the morning if the exertion be not too great.”

“Oh,” said Hildegarde, laughing, “you will find it more difficult to be ready than I shall.”

“Not to-morrow,” said Hamilton; “I shall be at your door waiting for you, even before the clock strikes.” And in the morning, when she opened her door, there he stood. He unconsciously stepped lighter as he passed the rooms containing his sleeping relations. Hildegarde pointed to them, and said they were occupied

by English people ; she had seen them arrive the day before, had passed them on her way down stairs, and, while still talking of the gre man and the veiled lady Hamilton hurried her into the carriage and they drove off.

CHAPTER XLVI.

HALT !

IT was still early when Hildegarde and Hamilton reached Mayence ; so early, that, after lingering over their breakfast an unusually long time, the latter said he would make some inquiries about the Baroness Waldorf, and Hildegarde could go to her at a later hour. After a very short absence he returned, and throwing himself into a chair, exclaimed, " Well, certainly this is the most unaccountable conduct ! "

" What is the matter ? " asked Hildegarde, turning very pale, " has she left Mayence too ? "

" Yes—gone again ; and without leaving any message for you ! "

" There must be some extraordinary mistake or confusion either on her part or Hortense's ! I could almost agree with Count Zedwitz, and think she was purposely avoiding me, if I had not read the letters which she wrote—her hopes that we should be long together—her regrets that I was not a few years older—her entreaties

that Hortense would not let me leave Munich until she had found some person to take charge of me : and now to leave me to wander about after her in this way ! So apparently to forget my existence ! It is quite incomprehensible !”

“ She has gone to Waldorf,” said Hamilton, “ and a—Waldorf is not far from Coblentz.”

“ You surely would not advise me to pursue her farther !” cried Hildegarde, indignantly.

“ Oh, no ! I have advised, and still advise you to go home.”

“ And yet I shall make one effort more, though most unwillingly,” said Hildegarde ; “ I should be ashamed to go home after a wild-goose chase of this kind ; I must know at least what to say to my relations. Suppose I were to write to the Baroness, and await her answer here ? That will—that must explain everything.”

“ Write,” said Hamilton, “ and we can take it to the post ourselves, when we go out with a *valet de place*, who must show us everything worth seeing. I dare say we can spend two or three days very pleasantly here.”

“ I shall be dreadfully in your debt !” observed Hildegarde, blushing.

“ Not at all,” said Hamilton, with the most serious face imaginable. “ You have more than enough money for all your expenses here, though perhaps not quite enough to take you home.”

The letter was written, and they sallied forth, preceded by a loquacious *valet de place*, to whose

remarks, after the first five minutes, they did not pay the slightest attention.

When they were returning to the hotel, by a newly-made walk along the banks of the Rhine. Hildegard stopped to look at a new and beautifully-built steamboat, on which there was a placard hung up to say that she would sail the next morning for Cologne.

"Should you like to see the interior, Hildegard?"

"Oh, of all things!" and the steamboat was examined with a degree of curiosity, interest, and admiration, of which those accustomed to the sight from infancy can form no idea. The captain of the ship, who happened to be on board, attracted probably by her appearance, had every drawer and cupboard opened for her inspection, and Hamilton was beginning to find his explanations rather long and tiresome, when he suddenly concluded them by hoping that she was to be one of his passengers the next day.

"We have not yet quite decided," said Hamilton, laughing at her embarrassment; "though I do not," he added, turning to her, "I do not in fact see what there is to prevent us."

"We shall have fine weather," observed the captain, "and shall be in Cologne in good time in the evening."

"I don't think we could do better, Hildegard," said Hamilton, in a low voice in English.

"I am afraid it would be improper—wrong,

without any object but amusement ! just consider for a moment."

"I cannot," said Hamilton, "see any greater impropriety in your passing a day or two in a crowded steamboat, than at a hotel along with me—rather less, perhaps, but I deny the impropriety altogether, when I take into consideration that I have been one of your family for the last year, and that you have learned so completely to consider me a friend—almost a relation."

"That is true," said Hildegarde, "but still——"

"Then," continued Hamilton, "you cannot have an answer to your letter for three days at least—we shall be back just in time to receive it. Whether we pass to-morrow night at Cologne or Mayence, is quite unimportant, and I should like to show you the Rhine scenery. Let it be hereafter associated in your mind with your recollections of me !"

This last sentence was pronounced half pathetically, half beseechingly, and Hildegarde made no further opposition to a plan which accorded but too well with her own inclinations.

We will spare our readers the description of the impression made on her by the Rheingau, Johannisberg, the Lurlei, Coblenz, Rolandseck, the Drachenfels, etc., etc., etc.

"What a pretty room !" said Hildegarde to Hamilton, who had followed her up the stairs of the Hôtel Bellevue at Deutz. "What a pretty

room ! We have a complete view of the Rhine, and quite overlook the garden. I really should like to stay here a week—if I dared.”

“ I have no objection,” said Hamilton, laughing, “ though I have just heard there are so many princes and serene highnesses in the house that I must sleep on the sofa in this room, if you have no objection ; for only this and the bedroom adjoining are to be had.”

The waiter entered the room just at this moment to inquire if M. and Madame would sup there, or at the *table d'hôte*.

“ Here,” said Hamilton, and he blushed deeply, as he turned to Hildegarde, who was sitting on the window stool, but no longer looking at the Rhine, or into the garden—she had fixed her eyes on the door as the waiter closed it, and with parted lips and slightly contracted brows, seemed expecting to hear more.

“ You look quite shocked at that man’s stupid mistake,” said Hamilton, with affected carelessness.

“ It was not a stupid mistake ; it was a very natural conclusion.”

“ You mean on account of the rooms, perhaps ? Don’t let that annoy you, for you shall have undisturbed possession of both—I dare say I can get a bed at one of the inns at the other side of the river—indeed, I should have proposed it at once, only I did not like to leave you here alone.”

"I am afraid you will think me very selfish," said Hildegarde.

"Not at all."

"Unnecessarily prudish, then?"

"Rather."

"You are right," she said with a sigh, "after having gone off with you in this—this very—thoughtless manner, any attempt at prudery is preposterous—ridiculous! There is, in fact, nothing to prevent your sleeping in this room, if you do not fear the sofa being too uncomfortable."

"There *is* something to prevent me," said Hamilton, "and that is, you do not wish it. I will go at once across the bridge, and if there be any room to be had, not quite at the other end of the town, I shall not return until morning."

"But had you not better wait until after supper?"

"It is scarcely advisable, for at this time of the year there are so many travellers, that nothing in the neighbourhood may be to be had; and you know we start early." While he spoke, however, the waiter appeared with the tray containing their supper, and half blushing, half laughing, they sat down together, and between talking and eating, in the course of a few minutes, forgot all about the matter.

It was the waiter, the "stupid man," who was again to remind them of the impropriety of their conduct. He had returned to say that the band

of one of the regiments at Cologne would play in the garden—perhaps Madame would like a table and chair to be kept for her ?

Hamilton did not venture to look at his companion, as he refused the offered civility, but snatching up his hat, hurried away as fast as he could.

But he returned, and very soon too, and great was his annoyance to find Hildegarde already in her room, and the door closed ; he walked backwards and forwards, not very patiently or quietly, for about ten minutes, and then knocked.

“ Good night,” said Hildegarde.

“ I am sorry to tell you that I have not been able to find a room, excepting in a very out-of-the-way place : as the packet leaves so early, and I am so apt to be late, I thought it better to ask you what I should do ? ”

“ I am very sorry,” began Hildegarde.

“ So am I,” said Hamilton, “ but as it cannot be helped, I think you might just as well come out here for an hour, and talk over our journey back.”

“ I am going to bed ; I am tired.”

“ Have you any objection to my smoking a cigar, if I open the window ? ”

“ None whatever, you may smoke a dozen if you like.”

He opened the window and leaned out to watch the gay scene which was passing below him. The garden was crowded with guests, and

well lit with candles, protected from the wind by glass globes ; the murmuring of voices, and gay laughter reached him, and had he not still entertained a faint hope of seeing Hildegarde again, he would have joined the revellers, not in the hope of actual enjoyment, but to banish thoughts which were crowding thick upon him, and producing a state of nervous irritation most unusual to him. He felt so provoked at Hildegarde's tranquil, friendly manner ; it contrasted so painfully with his own state of feverish uncertainty, that the jealous vision of Zedwitz unrepulsed, rose, more and more distinctly before him. Would not the situation of governess be intolerable to one of her proud nature ?—and after having tried it, would she not joyfully accept the hand of Zedwitz, who, she said, “loved her better than anyone ever did—better than she deserved ?” These thoughts at length became intolerable, and with one bound he was again at her door.

“Hildegarde, the band is beginning to play in the garden ; will you not come to listen to it ?”

“No, thank you.”

“But you have not yet gone to bed, I hope ?”

There was no answer audible.

“You have not yet gone to bed ? I want to speak to you—open the door, I beg—I entreat.”

“Whatever you have to say can be said to-morrow just as well as now.”

"I should rather say it now."

"And I should rather hear it to-morrow."

Hamilton knew her too well to persevere, and returned again to his window, where he remained for more than an hour, unconscious of everything passing beneath him, and merely hearing a confused sound of instruments, which had the effect of producing an almost painful feeling of fatigue. He closed the window, and looked rather despondingly round the room, which, as a dormitory, promised but few comforts, he extinguished the candles, and then threw himself at full length upon the sofa: he had been thinking intensely, and as he lay there in the darkened chamber, he resolved that another night should not find him in his present state of uncertainty; and why should he endure it now? Why not know his fate at once? He would insist on Hildegarde's listening to him, and answering him too! Starting up, his eyes were instantly rivetted on a line of bright light visible under her door; she was still awake; up perhaps. He knocked, and observed in a low voice, as he leaned against the door, "Hildegarde, I cannot sleep!"

"I am so sorry!" she answered—"the sofa, I suppose——"

"Yes, the sofa," said Hamilton.

"I wish," she said, coming toward the door, "I wish I could resign this room to you, but——"

"There is no necessity; give me some of the

pillows which you do not want, and I shall be quite comfortable."

"How stupid of me not to have thought of that before!" she exclaimed, opening the door. "When you were absent I could have arranged everything, but the fact is, I have been for the last two hours *thinking*—really thinking, more than I have ever done in my life!"

"So have I," said Hamilton, quite overlooking the pillows she was collecting for him. "Suppose we compare thoughts?"

"Not now, to-morrow."

"Now, now; this very instant," he said, seating himself on the sofa, and motioning to her to take the place beside him. She shook her head, and continued standing.

"What on earth do you mean by this reserve—this unusual prudery?" he continued, moving towards the side against which she was leaning.

"Nothing," she said, drawing back, "I only think it would be better to defer anything you wish to speak about until to-morrow, it is so late—so very late."

"This is not the first time we have been together at midnight," said Hamilton, laughing; but as he spoke she blushed so deeply, that he added, seriously, "When there was any impropriety in it, I told you; you may believe me now, when I tell you there is none!"

"You are not quite infallible, I fear," she said sorrowfully, "for you did not see any improp-

priety in my travelling alone with you here, and I now both see and feel it, and shall regret it all my life ! ”

“ Good heavens ! ” exclaimed Hamilton. “ Have I ever said or done anything——”

“ Oh, no, never—never ! ” cried Hildegarde, interrupting him.

“ Then why withdraw your confidence from me, if I have not done anything to forfeit it ? ”

“ I have the same confidence in you I ever had,” she answered, with a sigh ; “ but I——have unfortunately lost all confidence in myself ! ”

“ How do you mean ? ”

“ I have discovered that it was not a wish to see the Rhine or be in a steamboat which made me leave Mayence with you.”

“ And what was it, then ? ” cried Hamilton, eagerly.

“ It was the desire to be with you—to enjoy your society undisturbed for a few days before we parted forever ! ”

“ Not forever,” said Hamilton.

“ I am ashamed to think how easily I allowed myself to imagine that I ought to follow this Baroness Waldorf to Mayence, still more so to think how soon I stifled my scruples about coming here—and so effectually, too, that the whole obvious impropriety never struck me until this evening, when the waiter——”

“ Was guilty of the horrible supposition that

you were my wife ! Would that be so dreadful ? ” asked Hamilton.

“ The waiter showed me by this simple remark,” she continued, without noticing his interruption, “ that I ought never to have been with you as I have been under any other circumstances, and I felt condemned at once. I must return home to my step-mother.”

“ Perhaps for a couple of years, it would be the best thing you could do,” said Hamilton.

“ To my step-mother or—to Mademoiselle Hortense ? ” she said, musingly, as she seated herself on a chair, and unconsciously moved it towards him. “ Of course I have given up all idea of going to the Baroness Waldorf.”

“ I am glad to hear it. I never liked the plan.”

“ And I am so sorry to be obliged to give it up ! ”

“ Do not regret it—it would not have answered. I never saw anyone for whom the situation of governess was less eligible, notwithstanding your excellent education and extraordinary talent for languages.”

“ Eligible ! ” repeated Hildegarde. “ You are right. I am no longer eligible—I am no longer fit to direct the education of—of any girl ! ”

“ I hope you will never speak to anyone else in this manner,” said Hamilton, gravely. “ You would make people suppose you had been guilty of some serious misdemeanor.”

"I have been guilty of a misdemeanor," said Hildegarde, despondingly, "and one which I should think it necessary to confess to the Baroness Waldorf before I entered her house ; having done so, I conclude she would refuse to resign her daughter to my care. To avoid the merited mortification, I shall go home, tell everything to Hortense, and be guided by her advice for the next year or two. And now," she added, "I have only one thing more to observe, and that is, that we ought to repair our thoughtlessness as well as we can, or, rather, avoid a continuation of it, by separating at once. I shall return to Mayence to-morrow, and you must go on to England."

"I will go to—Scotland, if you will go with me, Hildegarde," said Hamilton. "Don't be angry, I am not joking. I have listened to the subject of your two hours' meditation, and now I expect you to listen to mine." And he entered into a long and, all things considered, not very prejudiced exposition of the state of his affairs—informed her of the £5,000 pounds which he should inherit in two years, and after hoping that they could contrive to buy something and live somewhere with that sum, ended, as he had begun, by proposing her going with him to Scotland, and then returning to her mother until he could claim her altogether.

She listened in silence, the expression of deep attention changing by degrees into surprise and

perplexity. It was the first time that the idea of a marriage with him had entered her mind ; she had taught herself to consider it so completely an impossibility that his occasional outbursts of passion or tenderness had ceased to make any impression on her. Ashamed of the confession which she had so ingenuously made to him just before, and not prepared for the sudden change of feelings which his words produced, she turned away, and when he paused for an answer, did not even make an attempt to speak.

As Hamilton waited in vain for an answer, his former doubts became certainties—she liked, but did not love him. With a difficulty in utterance, in strong contrast to his former fluency, he now stammered out his hopes that he had not deceived himself as to the nature of her feelings towards him.

“ No—oh no,” answered Hildegarde, but without turning round.

“ And you do or will try to love me sufficiently to——”

“ Why force me to make unnecessary confessions,” she said, with a deep blush ; “ rather let me ask you when you heard that you would inherit this fortune which makes you independent. In Frankfort, perhaps ? ”

“ No,” replied Hamilton, “ I knew it when I was a child, and considered it then, though not quite a fortune, certainly a very large sum of money.”

"And is it not a very large sum of money?"

"For a boy to buy playthings and ponies, yes; but for a man to live upon——" he paused; there was too much intelligence in her eager glance.

"For a man" she said, "brought up as you have been, it is probably too little—nothing!"

"Not so," cried Hamilton, quickly. "With my present ideas and feelings it is a competence—it is all I require—all I wish."

"You could then, have married Crescenz if you had desired it?" she said, slowly.

"I could never have loved her well enough to induce me to make the sacrifice——"

"The sacrifice! And it is great—very great, perhaps?"

"It ceases to be one when made for you."

"And you have only lately—only very lately, perhaps, been able to resolve on this sacrifice?"

"Let me use your own words, Hildegarde. Do not force me to make unnecessary confessions," said Hamilton, blushing more deeply than she herself had done.

She leaned on the table, and bent her head over her hands. Hamilton felt very uncomfortable. "I expected," he said, at length, with some irritation, "I expected that this explanation would have been differently received."

"I wish," she answered, "it had never been made. I would rather have remembered you as I thought you—dependent on your father's will—having no option."

"This is too much !" cried Hamilton, starting from the sofa, and striding up and down the room. "I have fallen in your esteem when—but you do not understand."

"Probably not quite, but this is evident to me, the sacrifice must be something enormous—beyond what I can imagine—or you would not have hesitated so long, for—I think—yes—I am sure you—love me."

Hamilton stopped opposite to her, and exclaimed, "Oh, Hildegarde, how can you torture me in this manner !"

"I would rather torture myself," she said, "but," and she looked at him steadily, "but I must nevertheless tell you that I cannot, will not, accept your sacrifice !"

"Then, Hildegarde, you do not love me," he cried impetuously.

"Do I not ? Can you not see that I am giving the greatest proof of it of which I am capable ? Can you not believe that I, too, can make a sacrifice ?"

"I understand and appreciate your motives better than you have done mine," he answered. "Wounded pride is assisting your magnanimity. You are mortified at my having hesitated—deliberated—it was prudent, perhaps, but I am heartily sorry for it now. I see it has made you so control your thoughts and inclinations that friendship, and not love, is all I have obtained for an affection deserving something more—if you knew

but all——” he paused ; but as Hildegarde made no attempt to speak, he continued, “ I thought, when we met at Aschaffenburg, I hoped, from what you said just now—that—Hildegarde ! ” he cried vehemently, “ you require too much from me ; spoiled by adulation, you expect me, without a struggle, to change my nature, my habits, and my manners ! I cannot rave like your cousin—— ”

Hildegarde became deadly pale, she tried to speak, and moved her lips, but no sound issued from them.

“ Nor,” he continued, still more vehemently ; “ nor can I bear repulses, like Zedwitz ! ”

Hamilton heard her murmur the words “ ungenerous—unjust.”

“ Forgive me, Hildegarde ; I spoke in anger, and am sorry for it—I ought not to have named your cousin—can you forgive me ? ”

She held out her hand in silence.

“ Now,” he said, seating himself beside her, “ don’t let us ask each other any more questions, or talk any more of sacrifices ; but, like a dear love, you will promise to go to England with me to-morrow ! won’t you ? ”

She remained silent, her eyes cast down, while she slowly shook her head.

“ You will not ? ”

“ I dare not,” she answered, gently ; but observing him again about to start up, she laid her hand on his arm, and continued, “ Do not ask

me to do what may cause us both unhappiness hereafter. I will enter into an engagement with you on reasonable terms."

"Oh—on reasonable terms!" he repeated ironically.

"I cannot go on—you are too unkind," she said, while the tears started to her eyes.

A long and painful pause ensued. Hamilton broke it by saying, "Well, what are your terms—anything is better than nothing—name them—I agree to everything provided I may claim you in two years."

"Even if you do not," said Hildegarde, "I promise to forgive you."

"And forget me too, perhaps," said Hamilton, with a forced smile.

"That I—cannot promise; but it is of little consequence what concerns me. You must return home for these two years, weigh well this sacrifice which you must make; it will not be altogether a pecuniary one, for I suppose there is not the slightest chance of obtaining the consent of your family to our marriage; and as you spoke of residing in Germany, I conclude you must give up all your relations and your country too?"

"Go on," said Hamilton, without moving, or looking at her.

"I shall consider myself bound by a promise, which I now freely make, to await your decision—you are free."

"Go on," he again repeated, as he had done before.

"What can you desire more?"

"Why, nothing, though I almost expected you to propose committing to paper, in due form, this most rational 'engagement on reasonable terms,'" and he drew some paper towards him as he spoke, and took up a pen; directly, however, throwing it down, he exclaimed passionately, "Oh, Hildegarde, this will never do! Much as I admire your decision of character, and freedom from the usual weaknesses of your sex, I—I did hope—I do wish that for once you would be like a girl of your age! I am ready, without regret, to leave all my relations and friends, give up all my hopes of fame or success in life—expatriate myself forever——"

"I see, I understand now," cried Hildegarde, interrupting him. "A man has hopes of fame, expectations of success in life. We have nothing of that kind, and, therefore, our love is perfectly exclusive, all-absorbing."

"Not yours," said Hamilton, "though I confess I expected something of the kind from you, some little enthusiasm at least; however, our contract is made, irrevocably—even though I see and feel that your love is of the very coldest description, in fact, scarcely deserving the name."

"Oh, why," cried Hildegarde, with all her natural vehemence of manner, "why is there no

sacrifice that I can make to convince you that you are mistaken ! There is none I would not make, provided it were not injurious to *you*."

Hamilton shook his head and turned away.

"You do not believe me ? Try me—ask any proof—anything."

He started from his seat, walked to the window, threw it wide open, and leaned as far out as he could in the night air.

All this was too much for Hildegarde, her efforts had been great to conceal her feelings, and she perceived she had been misunderstood ; her sincere desire to act magnanimously had been treated with contempt ; Hamilton, whom she had learned to trust without reserve or examination, was displeased, angry with her, perhaps. Perplexed, worried, and wearied, she did at length, what it would have been better had she done half an hour before ; she covered her face with her handkerchief, and burst into tears.

The moment Hamilton turned round and perceived that she was crying as heartily as could be desired of any girl of her age, he forgot his anger at her unexpected opposition to his wishes, and rushing towards her, commenced an incoherent succession of excuses, entreaties, and explanations. It would have been difficult for a third person to have known what he meant ; Hildegarde, however, seemed to understand him perfectly. In a short time she began to look up, and smile again, and in about a quarter of an

hour they were discussing their future plans in the most amicable manner imaginable. Once more Hamilton had recourse to the pen and paper, but this time it was to make a sketch of the peasant's house near Hohenfels, which was to be their home two years hence. He would write to the Z——s about it directly, or go to them ; that would be better still !

No ; Hildegarde thought it would be wiser to wait until he could purchase.

" We shall have cows, and calves, and all those sort of things, I suppose ? " said Hamilton.

" I should think so," replied Hildegarde, very gravely.

" I wonder shall we be able to keep a pair of horses ? " said Hamilton.

" Cart-horses ? Perhaps we may," answered Hildegarde, merrily.

" No ; but seriously, Hildegarde, I should like to know how many servants we shall have ! "

" Very few, I suspect," said Hildegarde, " and therefore, directly I return to my mother, I shall endeavour to learn to be really useful."

" But," said Hamilton, " but these domestic details, which were so disgusting to you—these vulgar cares——"

" All, all will now be full of interest," said Hildegarde, laughing ; " I really feel as if I could even learn to cook ! "

" No, no ; I do not wish that, we shall cer-

tainly have a cook ! A. Z. seemed to think we could get on quite comfortably if we lived in the country ! I shall not at all mind going out with the plough if it be necessary, and you—you can spin, you know ; nothing I admire so much as a graceful figure at a spinning-wheel ; you shall have one made of ebony, and—but can you spin ? ”

“ Not yet, but I can easily learn, and in time, I dare say, we shall have a whole press full of linen.”

“ Oh, I am sure we shall get on famously ; the Z——s are not at all rich—rather poor, I believe, and they are so happy, and really live so respectably—they will be our neighbours, and I am sure you will like them.”

“ I remember, I rather liked her at Seon, because she lent me books,” observed Hildegarde.

“ They will be society for us—that is, if we ever want any. Baron Z—— is very cheerful, and his wife is really a very sensible woman. She understands housekeeping, and soapmaking, and all that sort of thing, and will be of great use to you, I am sure. Then I shall rent half their alp, and send up our cows there in summer, and then we shall go to look after them, and make little parties with the Z——s. I must tell you all about that.”

And he did tell her all about that, and so many other things too, that the night wore away—the candles burnt down, and as at length the flame

extinguished itself in the melted wax, they looked at each other in the grey, cold light of breaking day!

The two days which Hamilton and Hildegarde passed in the Rhine steamboat, on their return to Mayence, were the happiest of their still so youthful lives. As they sat together, watching the beautiful windings of the river, or glancing up the sides of the wooded mountains, the most perfect confidence was established between them. The events of the last year were discussed with a minuteness which proved either that their memories were exceedingly retentive, or that the most trifling circumstances of that period had been full of unusual interest to both. Their confessions and explanations were not ended even when they reached Mayence, where Hildegarde found a letter from the Baroness Waldorf. As she gave it to Hamilton, she observed: "After what you told me this morning, I can pardon, though I cannot approve of her conduct—she says, however, that she wrote to Hortense to prevent my leaving Munich, and I am glad of it, as it will save me from all explanations, and I can show both my mother and Hortense this letter too; so everything has ended just as we could have wished."

"Yes," said Hamilton, "and we will endeavour to believe all the Baroness's excuses—I dare say she has changed all her plans—and

perhaps, she may *not* engage a governess for her daughter for a year or two ; we will also consent to her marriage with Zedwitz—to whom she is as attached as such a person can be—though she is not likely to rise in his estimation by the proof which she has given of her jealousy—but what do you mean to do with this order on her banker at Frankfort—this peace-offering which she so diffidently calls her debt ? ”

“ I—should like very much—to return it,” said Hildegarde, hesitatingly.

“ I thought so,” said Hamilton, “ and in the meanwhile I can write to A. Z., to let her know that if we are all alive in two years we shall be together, and to request Baron Z—— to enter into negotiations with that Felsenbauer, the peasant on the rocks, as he is called. I shall tell A. Z. to send you my journal : it may amuse you to read it, and in the margin you must write whatever is necessary in explanation, or, in short, whatever you think likely to interest us when we look it over at the end of ten or twelve years. A journal, you know, like mine, is marvellously improved by age ! ”

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Hamilton accompanied Hildegarde on her way home as far as she would allow him—the last day’s journey she chose to be alone, and at Ingolstadt they parted. For two years ? Or for ever ?

CHAPTER XLVII.

CONCLUSION.

THERE may be some, there may be many of my readers who would think that Hamilton had been a "confounded fool," were they to hear that, at the appointed time, he braved the threats, resisted all the bribes of his uncle, remitted his five thousand pounds to Munich, and returned to Bavaria, with the intention there to live and die, "the world (*viz.*, London) forgetting, by the world forgot." We do not wish him to fall in the opinion of anyone, and therefore request all persons disposed to entertain such an opinion of him, under such circumstances, to close this book, and imagine he acted as they would have done in his place. Often have vows as solemn as his been broken, and for the same mercenary motives which might have tempted him; and if the world have not applauded, it has at least not censured such derelictions in a manner to deter others from practising them.

Suppose him, then, reader, (not gentle reader, for such would never consent to the supposition,) suppose him at the end of two years, a man of the world, or a worldly man, whichever you please, Hildegard not exactly forgotten, but remembered only as a "beautiful girl with whom he had been at one time so much in love as to have entertained the absurd idea of rusti-

cating with her on a couple of hundred pounds per annum in the Bavarian Highlands ! ” Suppose him attached to some embassy, young, handsome, and rich, the chosen partner of all still dancing princesses ! Or suppose we put an end to Uncle Jack at once, and allow Hamilton, without further delay, to inherit a fortune which would give him a position in the London and Yorkshire world ; if you wish it, we can double his income too—in books, fifty or sixty thousand a year is quite a common thing, and as to old uncles, they are only mentioned in order that they may die, just when their fortune is necessary to the happiness or comfort of younger or more interesting persons. Suppose——Suppose——Suppose you close the book, as before recommended, for nothing of this kind occurred. Uncle Jack (who in his youth had taken a trip to Gretna Green) might have pardoned his nephew’s “ loving not wisely, but too well ” ; but he neither would do so, nor would he die, and so Hamilton, after having listened to his father’s reproaches and expostulations, endured his brother’s sneers, and steadily set at defiance his uncle’s anger, returned to Munich and claimed his bride, of whose coldness or want of enthusiasm he was never afterward heard to complain.

Felsenbauer’s little property was purchased, and Hans, after having officiated as Hamilton’s “ gentleman ” for two years in England, returned

to his primitive occupation of directing the plough—not quite, indeed, with the satisfaction of a Cincinnatus, for years elapsed before he ceased to regret his fallen greatness, or to expiate to his few ignorant fellow-servants on the splendors of his master's home.

Hamilton resigned himself more cheerfully than his servant to his change of fortune ; he never spoke of home, with which his communication became very indirect and uncertain from the time his sister had married and gone to reside in the north of Scotland. His brother John seldom wrote, his father and uncle never ; he made no effort to conciliate the latter, not even taking advantage of the occasions, which presented themselves at a later period, of requesting him to become a godfather to a little Jack or a little Joan. He became a good farmer, a keen sportsman, and so celebrated as a rifle shot, that he was feared as a competitor at all the *Scheiben-Schiessen* in the neighbourhood. He generally wore a mountaineer's dress—perhaps because it was comfortable, perhaps, also, because it was becoming ; and in the course of a few years his family would scarcely have recognised him in the vigorous, sunburnt man, whose very features were changed in expression by his altered mode of life—energy and strength had taken the place of ease and gracefulness. A. Z. pronounced the change advantageous, and often said it would have been difficult to have found a

more picturesquely bandit-looking figure than his when, on a return from the hunt, he sprang on the rocky path leading to his mountain home, his slouched hat shading the upper, as much as his long moustache the lower part of his face.

As to Hildegarde, the calm, contented tenor of her life preserved her beauty in so remarkable a manner, that Hamilton seriously believed she grew handsomer every year ; they and the Z——s almost lived together, no summer heat or winter storm kept them asunder ; their alpine parties, and sledging expeditions to the neighbouring balls were made together, and many a little adventure is still remembered by both families, with a mixture of amusement and regret—regret that those times are past—gone—never to return again.

At the end of eight years Uncle Jack, unsolicited, relented, and Hamilton was recalled. Can it be believed that for some days he hesitated to obey the mandate ? that Hildegarde wept bitterly for the first time since her marriage ? But so it was. The offers which, ten years before, would have filled their hearts with gratitude and joy, were now accepted as a sacrifice made to the future prospects of their children. A. Z. to the last insisted that she would be the greatest sufferer of all. “In you,” she said, turning to Hildegarde, “I lose the most patient and intelligent of listeners ; in your husband, the most attentive of friends ; eight years’ intimate inter-

course, such as ours has been, has made you both so completely a part of our family, that, knowing how much we shall miss you, Herrmann and I have at length come to the long protracted, desperate resolution of leaving Hohenfels ; we ought to have done so long ago, on account of the education of our children."

"Oh, no, don't leave Hohenfels ; we shall be sure to return here next year—every summer !" cried Hamilton and Hildegarde, almost together.

But they have not returned, nor are they likely to do so. The revolution which commenced in Germany, in the year 1848, is still in progress ; to foretell how, or when it will end, would be difficult ; this much is, however, certain, that Bavaria is not likely to be soon again (if ever) as tranquil and happy as when these pages were first written ; *then* the most intelligent peasant would have refused to leave his waltz, his pot of beer, or his joyous *jodel*, for the sake of any newspaper that ever was printed, or even to hear a political discussion between the schoolmaster and the parish priest ! Great is the change which has taken place in this respect ; without any law to control the liberty of the press, newspapers of the worst tendency now circulate in all directions, and the peasant reads, thinks, and talks more of politics than of his crops, and naturally feels inclined to adopt opinions calculated to elevate him in his own estimation, and draw those down

to his level, whom he had formerly considered far above him. In order to appreciate the importance of this change, my countrymen must remember that in Germany the peasantry is the army.

Hohenfels is sold. Baron Z—— found the brewery more expensive than profitable, when his visits of inspection were limited to an occasional week or ten days. He is half inclined to purchase Hamilton's house, which still remains, shut up and uninhabited ; presenting, as A. Z. observed in her last letter, the perfect picture of a deserted house, with all its "garden flowers growing wild."

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"After all, Hildegard," said Hamilton, one morning, as they looked out of the breakfast-room window into his uncle's handsome domain, "after all, if we could conjure a few of your mountains, with some chamois upon them, here, I believe I could again prefer England to Germany—that is, in my present position—a poor man really can enjoy life in Germany—it is only a rich one who could do so in England !"

THE END.

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